Bhavan's Book University

The Life and Teachings of t Ramalingar



SP. ANNAMALAI

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY-7

What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of oharacter having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

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4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Sishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which is flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form of attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

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THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SAINT RAMALINGAR

By

SP. ANNAMALAI

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KULAPATI'S PREFACE

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts

and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita,* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who

were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita,* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD
NEW DELHI:
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

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1. INTRODUCTION

Though this book is not the first to introduce to the English-speaking public the life and mission of Saint Ramalingar who lived in Tamil Nadu in the nineteenth century and preached the Universal Religion, this is an outcome of a sincere study of *Thiruvarutpa,* the life-work of the saint. It attempts to present an analysis of his religion, experiences and attainments as revealed in this monumental work, as well as to bring out its literary merits.

Saint Ramalingar lived his religion; and his attainments, chiefly the embodied immortality, are the result of his service-oriented, spiritually exalted, yogic life. He lived in the midst of people, healing their ailments and teaching them the principles of the Universal Path, 'Suddha Sanmargam', which is a happy combination of service to fellow beings and spiritual experience. He was not for ignoring one for the other between these two, as was done by many great men. But he insisted that both of them would grow together helping each other. 'Suddha Sanmargam' is not a new religion but it wants one not to be confined within the limits of any one religion but to reach high spiritual realms, shedding all differences of caste, creed, religion, nationality, etc., and to experience the ultimate Reality. It dissuades one from engaging in disputes on the superiority of one religion over another. Every religion has its own value. It should be realized by those who follow it, but the fact that God-experience cannot be confined within the limits of religion, should be borne in mind. One can set oneself firmly in any religion but one's mind should soar high transcending the

sectarian aspect of one's religion, and should feel the inevitable oneness of all religions, i.e., the universal aspect of all religions. One should develop a harmonized outlook based on an unbiassed study of all religions and philosophies and understand that they coordinate with and complement each other in seeking the ultimate Reality, which defies discursive thought and comes to be realized only by spiritual experience.

In fact, the religious set-up, like the other institutions of caste, creed and so on, causes seclusion, mentally at least, and many are the instances in the world's history of animosity growing between societies, races and nations due to this seclusion. This animosity has many a time forced people to take weapons against each other and put themselves to untold sufferings.

Religious tolerance both in the national and international levels remains an ideal. While it is welcome that individuality be preserved, cordial relations among people of different faiths need not necessarily be disrupted, and the natural human sympathy and love hampered by carrying religious individuality to the extent of seclusion and resultant animosity. Quite apart from religious beliefs all men are brothers and humanity knows no innate differences. All men have the right to live maintaining their individuality and at the same time loving each other. This Universal Brotherhood—world fraternity—is stressed by Saint Ramalingar as the chief ideal of the religion he preached, for, the Ultimate Reality, the Supreme Lord, is one and He is the Father of all.

The Saint gives practical suggestions to put this ideal into practice. Love for each other may be expressed through compassion and service. "Compassionate service to all beings (*Jeevakarunya*) is the only way to attain the ultimate Reality," he asserts, and "differences of religion, caste, creed and nation, etc., should not come in the way of this service, lest the right of every one to love and to be loved as a brother should be at stake." Besides, he insists on practising 'Yoga' (concentration and attunement of mind).

His own experience taught him that 'Yoga' intensifies and increases one's power and abilities to do service; and compassion, the kindling force of service, makes easy the inflow of Divine Grace. This in turn helps opening up of unknown realms of consciousness through which spiritual realizations are possible. So his 'Suddha Sanmargam' is a triangle of devotion to god, service to fellow beings and entering into supra-consciousness which embodies in it the unending ideal of Universal Brotherhood and the attainment of embodied immortality. This is amply testified to by one of his appeals to the Supreme Lord:

> "Father mine own! let my humble appeal be heard by you and granted. I should love all men and beings and serve them. I should go to all places—to every nook and corner—sing your praise, and make your grace obvious by doing compassionate service. I should establish the Rule of Grace-Light leading the people in the Universal Path so as to enable them to experience you, the ineffable and the transcendent Reality. Whatever may be my shortcomings, you should forgive me. My Leader, I should also like to have an inseparable union with you."[1]

The urge for worship through service to all fellow beings is the impelling force behind this rare appeal. That this was heard and granted to the saint is obvious from his following declaration:

1. "My Lord! You have given the sceptre of Grace and ordained that I may rule with the Grace-Light".
2. "I have become wholly filled by the Divine energy and experienced it with the highest and most rare consciousness".[2]

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1. *Thiruvarutpa,* 6th Book, Part II, 35th poem, 1st stanza.
2. *Thiruvarutpa,* 6th Book, Part III, 36th poem, 88th stanza and 42nd poem, 96th stanza.

Combining in a triangular relation, the ideals of devotion, spirituality and service, he experienced communion with the Lord and thereby attained supernal powers and embodied immortality. He proposed to displace the rule of power with the Rule of Grace, a remarkable change indeed, making it felt through a zealous mission of spreading 'the religion of spirituality and service' which would render possible the coexistence of all religions despite their obvious differences—ritual and philosophical, letting thereby the people in the world at large live in peace and amity, finding enough time and a conducive atmosphere to fulfil their higher spiritual needs.

The Saint calls this transformation 'the Rule of Grace-Light' (*Arut-Jyothi*). Every man can be made to embody the manifestation of Grace in his personality, i.e., his mind, intellect and body. Once manifested, the Grace is experienced by him as Light. This means an increased amount of mental, intellectual, physical and spiritual power for sustaining and acting—the power not to destroy and disintegrate but to construct, preserve and unite. Hence the path shown by the saint is known as 'the Path of Light'.

The Tamil thought, expressed in classical ages and represented by epic characters created by 'Sekkizhar' and 'Kambar', viz., "All places are ours and all men are brothers", has thus taken a fully developed form of religion in the life and teachings of Saint Ramalingar. *Thiruvarutpa*, the life-work of the saint, embodies the 'Path of Light' as it represents his life and experiences, for he lived his philosophy. He himself was an embodiment of great compassion, and thereby experienced the Supreme as the Supreme Grace-Light' (*Arut-perum-Jyothi*), i.e., the Light within the Light within the Light. The perception of this Light Tripartite made him live for ever in transfigured body.

The present book ventures to detail in its chapters this rare story of Saint Ramalingar who by his presence and teachings tries to guide this world of ours in an unending Path of Love and Grace, specified by him as "the deathless

grand life". May the world be awakened and heed his teachings in order to attain peace in the international arena of political, cultural and social affairs as against the impending danger of total destruction that may be caused at any time by the slightest provocation, and as against the growing madness for wealth, pleasure and power which would also ultimately invite war and calamity!

2. SOURCES: 'THIRUVARUTPA' AND OTHERS

The complete works of Saint Ramalingar are the sources of this book. Life works of the saint are diverse in nature. Major portion of them is in the form of poetry. The rest consist of some musical compositions, a few prose works, a few commentaries, letters written by the saint to his followers at Madras, and the collection of his oral teachings, later recorded by his disciples.

This chapter proposes to make an analysis of the saint's works and to trace their history in order to provide a perspective of them which will help in the proper understanding of his life, experience and mission.

Thiruvarutpa is the general name given to all the saint's works, both poetry and prose. Various editors including A. Balakrishna Pillai who brought out editions of these works, adding their newer findings from time to time stuck on to this name. Seven editions were brought out separately by various scholars like Thozhuvur Velayuda Mudaliar in the years 1854, 1867, 1885, 1891, 1892, 1896 and 1924 respectively. Of these, the edition in the year 1892 was brought out by Ponneri Sundaram Pillai. This was the first edition that presented in one volume all the six books (divisions) of the saint's works. Subsequent editions in the years 1896 and 1924 followed suit.

Balakrishna Pillai's was the eighth edition through which he brought out for the first time, the saint's letters and many isolated poems and stanzas unknown till then. His edi-

tion is valuable in so far as it traces the history of manuscripts which he took much pains to obtain from various sources, chiefly from the family circles of the saint's followers and disciples.

Velayuda Mudaliar compiled for the first time, the saint's works and arranged them in six books. He brought out only five books on two occasions and reserved the publication of the sixth expecting the saint's sanction.

The II Book of *Thiruvarutpa* needs special study as regards so many sacred places of worship to which its poems are dedicated. Evidently, the saint visited all these places and sang in praise of their deities.

The III Book contains 19 poems, all about the esoteric love of the saint for God. The poem, 'Ingita malai' of the I Book is also in these strains.

The IV Book contains, among others, poems dedicated to the four chief saints of Saivism, namely, Gnanasambandhar, Navukkarasar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar. These and the other poems in this book were written by him while he was at the Chidambaram area.

The V Book contains poems and a few songs dedicated to Lord Vinayaka and Lord Muruga. Of these, the poems on Lord Vinayaka were made by the saint while he was at Karunkuzhi, near Chidambaram. The poems and songs on Lord Muruga were the first pieces of poetry the saint made. The circumstances in which he made them are related in the chapter on his life.

Then, why should his first pieces of poetry be compiled as the V Book?

It is Velayuda Mudaliar who compiled the first five books. It is learnt from the short history of the *Thiruvarutpa* in verse composed by him that he had known, at the

time when he brought out the first four books, the fact that the *Thiruvarutpa* could be classified into six books. Hence there should have been some valid reason for the arrangement he adopted.

It is learnt from one of the saint's letters written to Irukkam Rathina Mudaliar that he permitted the latter to publish such of the poems which the Lord made him sing, being immanent in him. In the next letter the saint writes that he learnt that the poems on Otriyur and others were begun to be printed. These two letters reveal that the saint sanctioned that the poems dedicated to Thiruvotriyur and others be published first. The term "others" relate to those which were sung by him, not on Tiruvotriyur, but in the period of his worship at that place and those which were made by him while he lived in the Chidambaram area, including Karunkuzhi and Vadalur.

He should have given later his sanction to publish the poems on Lord Muruga, which he made in his early years.

There is a general opinion that the poems of the first five books of *Thiruvarutpa* were made by the saint when he did not get higher experiences. But a deep and comprehensive study would reveal that I and IV books too contain a few poems indicating his higher experiences in the spiritual realm.

Poems of the VI Book were sung by him, respectively while he lived in the Chidambaram area, Karunkuzhi, Vadalur and Mettukkuppam.

The musical compositions of the saint form the contents of the volume entitled, 'Keerthanaippakuthi'. This volume is so named because it consists of mainly 'Keerthanais', a particular form of musical composition. These reveal the knowledge commanded by the saint in the field of music. Some *Keerthanais* are very long and some are very short. Along with these, 'Namavalis' and couplets form part of this volume.

The Prose Works:

The II Volume of Balakrishna Pillai's edition consists of six essays. They are:

1. Manu murai kanda vachakam
   (Essay on establishing the justice of Manu).
2. Jeevakarunya Ozhukkam
   (Compassionate service)

3-6. Sanmarga Vinnappangal.
   (Appeals to the Lord).

Poraiyaru Chidambara Swamigal states that the saint wrote the essay 'Manu murai kanda vachakam' in his early years at the instance of his teacher Kanchipuram Sabapathi Mudaliar. But Balakrishna Pillai quotes the remark found in the edition of the year 1854, which says that it was written at the instance of |the members of the 'Sastra Vilakka Sangam'. It does not mention the period of its composition. Izhavazhaganar opines that it was written in the saint's early years. Since the saint's name is mentioned as 'Chidambaram Ramalinga Pillai' in the edition of 1854 it should have been probably written just a few years before the saint left for Chidambaram. The reason why he was called 'Chidambaram Ramalinga Pillai' even while at Madras is explained in the chapter on his life.

The second essay entitled, 'Seevakarunya Ozhukkam' is mentioned in Balakrishna Pillai's edition as the first part of the 'Sanmarga Vilakkam'. In one of his letters the saint mentions that he has written "Sanmarga Vilakkam" along with others namely, 'Kudumba kodam' (or Kudumba kosham), 'Pothu Vedam', 'Meymmozhipporul vilakkam'. Of these, 'Kudumba kodam' is found published in part. 'Meymmozhipporul vilakkam' is found incorporated in the volume of the saint's commentaries.

The Isolated Poems:

The volume entitled, 'The Isolated Poems' contains 319 stanzas. They include the incomplete poem, 'Kudumba

kodam', We made mention of this poem earlier. Apart from this poem this volume contains 25 isolated poems on various subjects, most of which are invocations to various Gods. In addition to these there are five poems of tribute given to the books written by contemporary scholars.

Letters:

The volume entitled, 'Thirumugappaguthi' contains 48 letters of the saint written chiefly to his followers at Madras and seven other items, namely, invitation for the inaugural function of the Sanctuary for Eternal Service and six announcements. Among the letters, 37 were written to Irukkam Rathina Mudaliar, six to Puduvai Velu Mudaliar and five to others. These letters contain valuable information about the incidents in the saint's life, service, first publication of *Thiruvarutpa*, total number of poems the saint dedicated to Chidambaram and the works he planned to write.

One of the letters is named, 'Ilakkanap Pathirikai'. It is learnt that some lines of this letter were written by the saint and the others were written by Thozhuvur Velayuda Mudaliar by his order. It had been written using words with indirect connotations. It may be expected to be explained by any scholar who attempts a study of *Thiruvarutpa*. But the present writer does not make such an attempt, for he thinks that this particular letter, being penned by Velayuda Mudaliar has no direct reference to the saint's life or mission.

Commentaries:

The versatility of the saint's scholarship is well exemplified by the commentaries written by him to pieces of literature. His commentaries are on:

(1) the 22nd stanza of the 'Ponvannatthandhathi' by Seraman Perumal Nayanar;
(2) one couplet of Vedanta Desikar;
(3) the word, *Tamizh*;
(4) the preface-poem of the book, 'Ozhivil Odukkam' by Kazhi Kannudaiya Vallal;

(5) the first line of the first stanza of the Periyapuranam;

(6) the name, 'Thonda Mandalam' and on the invocatory poem of the 'Thonda Mandala Sathakam' by Padikkasup Pulavar.

These commentaries have been published by Balakrishna Pillai as the eighth volume of his edition. Along with these is found published, a poetical work entitled, 'Sinmaya Deepikai'. It is learnt that the saint published this work in the year 1857 and that the name of the author is not found in this edition. It is to be noted here that the book 'Ozhivil Odukkam' by Kazhi Kannudaiya Vallal and the book 'Thonda Mandala Sathakam' by Padikkasup Pulavar were printed and published by the saint with his commentaries in the years 1851 and 1855, respectively.

Oral teachings:

In the 4th volume of Balakrishna Pillai's edition are found published some oral teachings of the saint. It has been reported by Balakrishna Pillai that they were not written by the saint himself but that his disciples had made later recordings of them. The dates and places of the teachings and the names of the disciples who recorded them are unknown. In the previous editions of *Thiruvarutpa* some oral teachings are found incorporated. Balakrishna Pillai has added to them some more collections made by him.

He informs us that these records written by the disciples cannot be taken as authentic as the saint's other works. He says that there could have been possibilities for omissions and commissions creeping in, for the disciples put in writing what the saint taught some time earlier. This could have happened despite their sincerity and the love and reverence they cherished for the saint. Hence he warns the student of *Thiruvarutpa* to verify the contents of these records by comparing them with the other works of the saint. He opines that if proper care is taken in scrutiny these records may help in the understanding of some minute points of the subjects dealt with in the other works of the saint.

This volume contains along with the oral teachings, a short essay on the daily routine of activities that an ordinary follower of the Universal Path (Sanmargam) should adopt. To this is attached a set of rules for keeping the physical health intact. In addition to these a daily routine of activities is prescribed specially for a close follower of the Universal Path.

All these sets of rules and routines stipulate certain diet regulations. At the end of this volume is found attached a list of herbs and the ailments and diseases from which they relieve one.

Though varied in form all these works of Saint Ramalinger edited in 12 volumes do have a common ideal, viz., Compassion. It connects man with his fellow-beings as well as with God and enables him to receive His guiding Light which goes by the Tamil name *Arul*. It is only because of this potential value of the saint's works that they are, from the beginning, called *Thiruvarutpa*. More will be said of this point in later chapters.

3. A DEVOTED LIFE

A detailed treatise in English on the saint's life and his mission was written and published by Sri T. V. Govindarajulu Chetty in the year 1935. Another short sketch of the saint's life was written in English by Swami Suddhananda Bharatiar.

Birth and first vision of God:

The saint was born at Marudhur, a small hamlet near Chidambaram, on 5-10-1823 as the youngest child of his parents Ramayya Pillai and Chinnammai. Ramalingam was the name given by his parents. When he was an infant—just five months old, his parents went to Chidambaram, taking him with them. They attended the 'puja' at the temple of Lord Nataraja. The screen in front of the deity was removed and all had 'darshan'. The little child also saw the Lord without winking his eyes and laughed somewhat loudly.

Later when the saint again visited Chidambaram in his 34th year and lived there for a considerable time, he recollected this incident so vividly that he mentioned this in one of the poems addressed to Lord Nataraja with a note about his experience at the time. He addresses the Lord as his real relative who revealed to him alone the entire divine vision. This was the first mystic vision, among others, that the saint had.

Early years at Madras:

Ramayya Pillai passed away when the saint was still

an infant. The whole family, headed by the eldest brother, Sabapathi Pillai, shifted to Madras. At the proper age Ramalingam was entrusted to Kanchipuram Sabapathi Mudaliar for his education. Soon he was found to evince little attention to his studies. As he later described his boyhood, he, unlike the truants of his age, did not have any liking for boyish plays or eating delicacies. Nor did he engage himself in sight-seeing, in talking nonsense or in quarrelling. He frequently resorted to solitude and probably indulged in introspection. He felt the strong inclination to worship God and thus gave vent to the yearning that had sprouted in his mind pretty early. For adoration he chose Lord Muruga and visited for this purpose the 'Kandha Kottam', the temple of the Lord. Thus he enjoyed the vision of the Lord, both inward and outward. He deemed Lord Muruga as his spiritual master. He also believed that saint Gnanasambandhar, the most reputed of the Saivite saints of the 7th Century, was a reincarnation of Lord Muruga. Deeming him as his master, he took to the study of his hymns and the part in 'Periyapuranam' pertaining to his life. A detailed study of the truths revealed to him by saint Gnanasambandhar will be made in the chapter on the saint's experiences.

Vision of Lord Muruga:

A story goes that the saint had a vision of Lord Muruga of Thirutthanigai in a mirror, in the room upstairs in the house in which his family lived. A study of his hymns in praise of Thirutthanigai gives the impression that this really happened. In the first stanza of the first poem he says that he had a vision of the Lord, with his six faces, twelve arms, spear, peacock and cock banner and of the 'Thanigai hill'. But in the 5th stanza of the same poem he entreats the Lord to order him to go to the hill. The fact that he never had the chance of visiting the hill is known from the poems of the same book. Hence it is clear that the vision was presented to him within the mirror and not in the hill. Further the presiding deity of the temple at Thirutthanigai does not have six faces and twelve arms as described by him. This incident of the vision in the mirror occurred in his ninth year.

This was the second instance of mystic vision in his life. The saint says that Lord Muruga came as his Divine Initiator, saved him in his very early age from entering into worldly ways, admitted him into his crew, and imparted to him spiritual knowledge.

Eminence in scholarship:

Then, even without undergoing schooling the saint was initiated into spiritual truths unintelligible to others of his age. Consequent to this vision the saint began to compose poems giving vent to the overflow of his feelings. Besides, his mind was so moulded by the divine grace that a beginning was made for his treading the pure path of 'Sanmargam' which he advocated later. He dedicated 48 poems to the Lord of Thirutthanigai and four to Lord Muruga, the presiding deity of Kandha Kottam, Madras. These were the first of his literary works and might have been composed in the period from his 9th year to 12th year. Probably at this time he happened to give a very long discourse at the house of one Somu Chettiar at Muthialpet, Madras, on one verse of Periyapuranam pertaining to the life of saint Gnanasambandhar and thereby attracted the attention of the elite and the pious of the city. At their request he discussed there the whole of the saint's life found in Periyapuranam. Even his eldest brother was wonderstruck that a boy who never attended school and who avoided his teacher should have a profound knowledge in religious literature. Consequently his and his wife's love and affection for this brother changed into awe and reverence. This extreme reverence made the saint so much embarrassed that he avoided his family too.

Worship at Thiruvotriyur:

He spent most of his time outside home. Out of dislike and horror of the humdrum life of the city which busied itself in accumulating wealth, he sought peace in the outskirts. Even in the nights he remained in such places. At times he went away from Madras and wandered in villages, fields and groves. There is a clue in one of his poems from which we can infer the date of his beginning to keep aloof from his family atmosphere. This poem states that from

his 12th year he underwent manifold sufferings. So it may not be wrong to infer that from the year 1835 he began to resort to solitude. Probably in this year he could have started to pay daily visits to Thiruvotriyur for worshipping the deity there. One of his sufferings was regarding the up-keep of his body, for he had to keep away from his family where his brother's wife was looking after him like a mother. There are instances in his poems to indicate that there were many days on which he returned home from Thiruvotriyur very late at night and lay down on the verandah outside suffering from hunger. One of his songs says that the Lord himself fed him in one of those nights. He had no liking for money. He threw into tanks or wells the coins given him without a higher purpose. Should he feel that the coins were given him with a divine purpose he would give them to the needy. Throughout his life he did not seek for money or respect the rich. Whenever he was in need of money he wrote to his close friend Irukkam Rathina Mudaliar. In one of his letters to Puduvai Velu Mudaliar he writes: "What can I do with money? Don't take the pains to send it."

We said that he made it a point to worship daily at the Siva temple at Thiruvotriyur consecrated by great sages. By this time he had many followers and admirers. They would also at times accompany him to this village. He offered worship in the temple as a servant would serve his master. After some time he felt filial relationship to the Lord and the Goddess. He felt no difference between Lord Muruga, his first favourite deity, and Lord Siva. Both were one for him, and he later declared that all the deities in the world are but various manifestations of one God and that all names are His. Singing in praise of Lord Muruga he gave him the attributes usually given to Lord Siva.

As days passed, he began to yearn for the Lord as a woman does for her lover. His feelings were poured out in the form of sweet songs. The Tamil language was most fortunate to have added to its tradition these wonderful pieces of literature similar to the hymns of the apostles of Saivism and Vaishnavism.

His Disciples:

Besides the spontaneous outpourings of sweet poems, the saint wrote some learned works also during this period. Most of them were fruits of repeated requests from his followers.

The saint also served as a guide for so many who sought spiritual knowledge. The chief among his disciples was Thozhuvur Velayuda Mudaliar who was later employed as Professor of Tamil at the Presidency College, Madras. It is found in some life-sketches of the saint that Velayuda Mudaliar joined the group of followers of the saint in the year 1849. He was fortunate to be enlightened by the saint in the scriptures in Sanskrit and Tamil. The saint gave fluent discourses on these which quite cleared the mind of the disciple. The other disciples were Veerasamy Mudaliar of Narasingapuram, Madras, Konthamuri Srinivasa Varadachariar, Gnanasundaram Iyer, Sundaram Pillai of Ponneri, Pandara Arumuga Iyya, the Kriyayogi and others. It is said that a host of other great contemporary scholars from all parts of Tamil Nadu called on the saint for clearing their doubts of different types.

Married Life:

Despite his exalted state, his mother, elder brothers, and sisters insisted on his marrying. He refused and remained unmoved by insistent persuasions. Lastly, a 'Sivayogi' on their behalf persuaded him with success. The marriage took place. But married life very soon proved to be a failure. It is learnt that the whole nuptial night he remained absorbed in the *Thiruvachakam* of saint Manickavasagar. Even afterwards he showed no interest in family life. Every night following the marriage he used to read hymns to the lady and tell her about 'Gnana' and 'Bhakti', and at break of the day he would go to Thiruvotriyur. Before the saint's spiritual light the poor lady felt like one who received an electric shock and passed away in 6 or 7 months.

Leaving Madras for Chidambaram:

The saint left Madras for Chidambaram yearning to have 'darshan' of |Lord Nataraja, the master of cosmic dance. This yearning was created in him, according to Izhavazhaganar, by his worship of Sri Thyagesar, the dancing deity at Thiruvotriyur. He says that the saint should have been above 24 years of age when he started to Chidambaram. It is recorded in the letter of Velayuda Mudaliar to the author of 'Hints on Esoteric Theosophy' that the saint started to Chidambaram in the year 1855.

Poraiyaru Chidambara Swamigal mentions that some of his followers including Velayuda Mudaliar accompanied him to Chidambaram, that they went first to Pondicherry where the saint gave some lectures to big audiences, that they then went to Chidambaram, and that after a few days the saint went to Seerkazhi, Vaideeswarankoil, Nagappattinam, and Madurai, and then returned and that on returning he stayed at Karunkuzhi for a long period at the request of Venkatesa Reddiar and his wife.

Stay at Karunkuzhi :

Staying at Karunkuzhi he frequently visited Chidambaram. It was then that the poems, which were later on compiled by T. Velayuda Mudaliar as the Fourth book, were sung in praise of the Lord and as the expression of the saint's important experience in the spiritual realm. That at frequent intervals the saint visited places like Nellikkuppam, Tindivanam and Cuddalore is clear from his letters. The letters show that the places he mostly frequented were Cuddalore and its surroundings and that he stayed there for longer periods. The two letters that conveyed his consent for the publication of the first four books of *Tiruvarutpa* were written from Cuddalore on 30.12.1860 and 18.11.1865 respectively. It is said that in the places he visited he used to give lectures. The purposes for which he stayed long at Cuddalore will be dealt with in a later chapter. At the time of publication of the first four books (in 1867) it seems Velayuda Mudaliar, Rathina Mudaliar and others wished to print the saint's name as 'Ramalinga Swami'. When they requested his permission through letter he refused it

saying in his reply that the name Ramalinga Swami was next to pomp. The extreme humility of the saint is evident from this incident.

In an undated letter in which the receiving date at Madras is said to have appeared to be 22-9-1866, the saint refers to the news about the death of an elder. He regrets that he could not be near his death bed and it had not been possible to bury the deceased in Chidambaram according to his long cherished wish. From this note of regret it may be surmised that 'the elder' mentioned by the saint might be his eldest brother.

Service to Humanity :

It is learnt from his many letters that his followers at Madras wanted him to come there and that he promised them in his letters to do so but went on postponing his journey.

In some letters he gives reasons for this procrastination. The reasons include (1) his inability to leave the patients who come to him for medical treatment to drift, and (2) his dislike for city life. Till his 44th year the saint stayed at Karunkuzhi. His compassion for the poor, the destitutes and the ascetics, characteristic of him from his early boyhood, became, as days passed, the main principle of his life and of his Sanmarga philosophy as expounded in his book *Manumurai Kandavasagam* written in his early days and by his poems entitled 'A short appeal from the son of God' and, 'An intense appeal from the son of God' and by his essays on 'Compassionate service'. Hence with the monetary aid of a number of followers he established at Vadalur on 23-5-1867 'the Sanctuary for eternal service' (Satya Dharma Salai). In this institution the poor were fed daily without any difference of caste, creed, sex and religion.

References to this sanctuary are found in his poems and letters. A study of his higher experiences shows that as a result of his experience and realization of the Lord's grace he became an embodiment of compassion. This sanc-

tuary for eternal service is a monument of his great compassion towards humanity in so far as it is still feeding daily the needy and the hungry. Popular saying goes that the stove-fire lit there by the saint still glows.

'The Samarasa Veda Sanmarga Sangam' is already known to have been started by him. Endeavours were made by the members of the Sangam to provide for the feeding at the sanctuary and to start a school attached to the sanctuary and to issue a periodical. The saint left Karunkuzhi and stayed in the sanctuary.

Retiring to Chittivalakam:

In 1870, he shifted to a small hamlet called Mettukkuppam 2½ miles south-west of Vadalur and lived there in an 'ashram' named by him as 'Chittivalakam' for reasons to be explained in a later chapter. This 'ashram' is said to have already been built for the purpose of accommodating a Vaishnava guide of that hamlet. On the advent of the saint there, the people of that hamlet are said to have dedicated the 'ashram' to him.

After establishing the sanctuary, it appears that the saint used to hide himself occasionally and appeared to nobody in the surroundings. This is learnt from his note issued on 26-10-1870 to the members in the sanctuary. In the year 1871, he had the 'Hall of Wisdom for universal worship' built by the chief members of 'the Sangam' according to a design suggested by his intuition. It is said that during the time of its erection the saint stayed all alone in the 'Chittivalakam'.

Some Miracles :

When the members who were in charge of the construction came to him, it is learnt that he pointed out certain flaws in the building and got them corrected. This was not the only miracle that happened in this period of the saint's life. While he was at Karunkuzhi, Vadalur and Mettukkuppam, many miracles are stated to have happened.

The saint himself did not make much of them. In a poem, in the form of a letter he, of course, points out a miracle which he believes to have happened by the grace of God. He says in that poem that a lamp burnt with mere water as it would have burnt with oil. The biographers have recorded that this incident happened while the saint was at Karunkuzhi in the house of a Reddiar. According to them the householder had gone somewhere with his family, leaving the saint to do his work and leaving a lamp near him. The lamp was burning; little by little the oil was exhausted; quite absorbed in his work the saint took the water in a small pot nearby thinking it was oil and poured it in the lamp. Strangely enough, the lamp continued to burn. The saint discloses another incident that happened while he was at Vadalur. One day when he was sitting in his attic a gentleman came and took rest nearby. He lay down and as if in deep sleep rested his feet on the lap of the saint. When the latter complained he replied, "I have learnt all that you have thought of. I came to see you in person." The saint, not convinced, indignantly removed his feet and placed them on the floor. The man said laughing, "My son, don't I have this much liberty with you?" and disappeared. Only then he realized that he who had come there and played with him was the Lord who was as sweet to him as honey, sugar and fruit. The Indian Yogic tradition calls certain miracles as 'siddhis'. It will be shown later that the saint in his exuberance claims himself as one possessed of 'siddhis'. An elaborate discussion on the saint's 'siddhis' appears in the last chapter.

Residing in 'Chittivalakam' the saint used to visit Vadalur occasionally. In the vicinity of this 'ashram' there is a stream of very sweet water. Probably the path chosen by the saint to go to Vadalur lay nearby the stream. This stream is mentioned by him in one of his poems.

Exalted spiritual state :

It is recorded in his life histories that even while he was at his ashram at Mettukkupam he used to give series

of lectures at intervals during his lonely hours on 'union with the infinite'.

The saint is said to have had the Sanmarga flag bearing yellow and white colours hoisted at the front of 'Chittivalakam' at 8 a.m. probably on 15-11-1872. At that period the saint was in an unimaginably exalted spiritual state, and his body also was in complete accord with it. He enjoyed the infinite Bliss to the utmost satisfaction that a spiritually most exalted, transformed and eternally tuned soul could have. Waking to the mundane world his soft heart melted with compassion for the people of the world at large. It is reported that he told those around him :

> "If it is possible all my teachings will appear in print. If not, they will have their say when time comes."

Entering the room :

On 30-1-1874 he entered his room at 'Chittivalakam' and asked his followers to lock the door. As the report goes, his last words were :

> "If the government order the opening of this door God's grace will be with me. Nevertheless, those who peep in will see nothing. It will be vacant. I will not be betrayed."

He never came out in his physical body. What happened to it will be dealt with in the last chapter. Before proceeding further let us have a glance at what he said in one of his poems that emanated from him in the last phase of his life in the physical body:

He says:

> "Oh light! O space in which all lights manifest! You drove away the darkness, fulfilled all my ambitions and aspirations, rooted out my ignorance and made me attain 'Gnana' and the experience thereby, made me have clear vision day by day, gave me the 'siddhi' to

do all, poured on me your Divine Grace and accepted me as your servant. I come unto You, my Lord, as ever yours."[1]

Contemporaries:

Some contemporaries of the saint were great men to whom he reverently paid his respects. The first and foremost of them was Sri Arumuga Swamigal of the Tirugnanasambandhar Mutt, Madurai, whom he, according to tradition, deemed as saint Gnanasambandhar himself and to whom he paid his respects through a letter in poetical form. The next was Thandavaraya Swamigal of Thiruvavaduthurai whom he met in his youth and deemed as his guide and to whom he paid his respects through letters in poetical form. Others were Konthamuri Varadachariar, Chidambara Swamigal of Thirugnanasambandhar Mutt, Madurai, Ramalingamurthigal and Tukkudi Adur Sabapathi Sivachariar. Of these, Chidambara Swamigal was held by the saint in high esteem. He praised him as the great soul who even enlightened him and who was empowered to give his disciples the power of doing the eight 'siddhis'.

Poraiyaru Chidambara Swamigal mentions in his book on the saint's life that Kodakanallur Sundara Swamigal was his contemporary and they met at Chidambaram. He also says that Murugadas Swamigal was a contemporary of the saint. The latter has composed two poems, each containing stanzas expressing his desire that the saint should come out from the room as he has promised.

1. *Thiruvarutpa,* 6th Book, Part III, 24th poem, 11th stanza.

4. BACKGROUND AND MISSION

In the previous chapter we were acquainted with the incidents which happened in the life of the saint. In this chapter let us trace the historical setting of his life and works so that we may evaluate the mission he undertook to reform the people both in the physical and spiritual planes.

The saint was born in the twenties of the nineteenth century when our country was under the rule of the British. That period in Indian history is called by the historians, 'the period of awakening'. For, quite aware of the cultural impact of the foreign rule, bands of enlightened Indians made heroic efforts to meet the challenge posed violently by the impact of the alien domination to the cultural and spiritual development in India. Of course, the physical impact of the British rule was there. But it was not so much felt with agonizing acuity as the cultural impact. Amaury De Riencourt writes in his book entitled, *The Soul of India*:

> "Everything in those days conspired to overwhelm the thoughtful Asians with a sense of the absolute superiority of the West: its complete monopoly of scientific knowledge in basic research as well as in technological application, the exuberant artistic creations, the vigorous literature, the dynamic outlook on life that contrasted so sharply with the complete stagnation that had ossified Asia's Old Civilisations. There

was no possible attitude in the early part of the nineteenth century except acceptance of the absolute superiority of the West. These farsighted Indians who started the process of India's awakening could and did only aim at full integration of India in the global structure of the West."[1]

Most of the educated Indians not only accepted the absolute superiority of the West but also adopted and advocated the Western way of life. No less a person than Raja Rammohan Roy, "the first Indian to learn enough from the West to be able to hold his own with the best minds of Europe and yet still to love and respect his own culture .... advocated the frank acceptance of all that Europe had to teach."[2] Western modes of living began to creep in the life of the educated and intelligent classes of people. It was mostly due to the English education.

> "Although its influence was speedily felt in helping to remove the deep-rooted prejudices and superstitious notions of the people, yet still numerous proofs can be adduced that its first introduction greatly tended to create among members of the educated and intelligent classes of the people, a lamentable atheism and indifference to religion in general. This was the natural result to be expected from the English education .... which while sapping the foundation of the Hindu religion substituted nothing in its place; hence a race of unbelievers sprang up and these would have increased a hundred-fold but for the intervention of Brahmoism."

Thus writes Mr. Leonard in his book entitled, *History of Prarthana Samaj*. In this he explains the impact of English education on the Indians. The national spirit and the respect for national culture were put to danger by this impact.

At the same time Hinduism was confronted by two

1. Jonathan Cape, 30, Bedford Square, London (1961), p. 227.
2. Basham, *The Wonder That was India*, (1954), p. 479.

serious dangers—one from within its own fold and the other from alien sources. The first had developed due to the age-long caste system within the Hindu fold. Simply on account of 'supposed low birth' thousands and thousands of Hindus were denied opportunities to get the basic amenities of life and cultural progress. Educational institutions, public places and temples closed their doors to them. The 'untouchables', they were ignored and sometimes ill-treated by the Hindus of higher castes. Nor was there amity and unity among the people of higher castes. They were united only in trodding on 'the untouchables'. In other respects, integration, a sure outcome of love and tolerance, was at stake. There were many sub-divisions within the higher castes themselves. The whole Hindu society was led by the numerous caste divisions towards appalling disintegration.

Caste divisions might have served a worthy purpose once upon a time in history. But down the ages it proved antagonistic to the display of natural love and to the promotion of unity which is the real strength of any society. It gave room for the domination of some groups over the others.

The other danger came from outside India.

With the large support given by the government the Christian Missionaries from various countries and nations in the West were making progress in India in converting Hindus into Christians. They had easy access to the downtrodden people in the villages, who were for ages, treated by caste-Hindus, as untouchables. By giving them education, medical help and employment opportunities the Christian Missionaries attracted them to Christianity. "Their enthusiasm both in evangelization and spreading English education was equally bubbling."[3] Thousands of Hindus were converted. Many enlightened caste-Hindus were

3. R. R. Diwakar, *Paramahamsa Sri Ramakrishna* (1964), pp. 22-23.

taken aback at this. They took it as a severe blow to Hinduism. They thought that the religious and cultural foundations of India were shaken. They felt serious concern over these two impelling forces that drove the Hindu society towards disintegration and total conversion into an alien religion. Hence there was really a challenge to the Hindu society.

"The challenge became formidable," writes R. R. Diwakar, "when some of the English-educated leaders of our own society lost nerve and began to think that a total abandonment of the spiritual bliss of Indian life was called for and that wholesale adoption of western civilization was the only remedy for all maladies and for the resuscitation of this country."[4]

Hinduism had to face another violent opponent also. Indeed it had to face it from the 11th century onwards when Mohamed Ghazni of Afghanistan repeatedly attacked Somnathpur. In the 14th century a Muslim Empire was established in India and it was followed by the Mughal Empire which maintained its suzerainty in the North India till the advent of the East India Company. Incessant wars were going on between the Muslim overlords and the Hindu Kingdoms of the North.

Similar was the case with South India also. The Kingdom of Bahamani Sultans and Vijayanagar Empire came to stay as neighbours as well as bitter enemies. The Vijayanagar Empire was at last put to dust by the Muslims. "The Hindu amoral cynicism had been crushed by the bloody and cruel conquest of Islam and definitely wiped out by the steely efficiency of its British successors," writes Amaury De Riencourt. He continues: "Nothing lived now in India's moribund body save the flickering light of spiritual faith; and it was this flickering light, linking a dead past to an unknown future, that was at the origin of the awakening."

4. Ibid, p. 32.

Mr. Amaury is right in saying that the spiritual faith was at the origin of the awakening. When the religious institution fails to kindle inspiration and promote unity and love among people, it is the spiritual faith that guides at least a few to take to sincere efforts to reform religion instead of thinking on the lines of atheism. Leaders who took up social reforms in the earlier part of the period of awakening, soon found that they could not make much progress unless they went to the roots and reformed the religion. A reoriented spiritual background is indispensable for any social and cultural reform. Dr. Bhandarkar, an ardent social reformer, is reported to have said, if social reform was to be permanent and beneficial to Hindu society, it ought to be based on religious reform.

Religious men of those days were not much worried about society. Without caring to do service they were only concerned with their own, individual salvation. R. R. Diwakar writes:

> "Vedanta and its deep truths seemed to have slipped away from the consciousness of enlightened society. They were not thought to be facts of spiritual experience but merely conceptual notions and intellectual ideas. Spiritual life was divorced from practical life and they were thought to be inconsistent. Different schools of religious thought were intolerant of each other and there was enough dogmatism prevailing. Materialistic tendencies were getting stronger. A number of superstitions and social evils held sway. . . . An atmosphere of inferiority complex . . . . was prevalent everywhere. Admiration for everything western and worship of western ideals seemed to have gripped the educated people of those times."[5]

Saint Ramalingar too has recorded the tendencies and outlook of the contemporary society. The fact that materia-

5. Amaury Dey Riencourt, *The Soul of India*, pp. 228-29.

listic tendencies were getting stronger is evident from many of his poems and other writings. While poverty was wide-spread, it is learnt from his poems, the well-to do were avaricious. They valued wealth as the only attainment in this world. They ignored and derided the scholarly simply because they were poor. They attached importance to outward appearances. They would not heed a man with dirty dress, but offer a warm welcome to those dressed in silk and other costly clothes. The saint himself hesitated once to attend a marriage function in one of his admirer's houses, for he feared that he might not be admitted in because of his poor appearance. Even if the houseowner would welcome him others would cast odd looks upon him.

Generally the people's greed for wealth manifested in many ways. They hoarded money but they did not have mercy to help the poor. They were interested only in earning money, engaging servants, living pompously and gratifying their appetites. Higher values of life were ignored by them.

In one of his poems the saint lampoons the people who feign that they are pious and God-fearing. He says that all their appearances are mere show. In the same poem he mentions the scholars in religious and philosophical literature who always engaged in hottish and fierce debates. They attacked the opponents with the fierceness of a wrestler. Religious bickerings were widely prevalent. Saint Thayumanavar also mentions that they were typical of his times. The saint not only points out their prevalence but also reproaches those who engage in such quarrels. He regrets over the negligence of the spiritual or the experience-aspect of religion.

He records in many poems that caste system is deep-rooted in the society. He feels strongly for the removal of these artificial distinctions which have proved harmful to the promotion of love and peace. He regrets that the people give undue importance to these distinctions.

Nothing was done by the religious authorities heading the various Mutts in Tamil Nadu to check the wholesale conversions to Christianity or to give adequate protection to the low-caste Hindus and to uplift their social status. The fact that caste system has developed to the detriment of true religion and spiritual progress was not at all realized. Rituals, but not the spirit of the people, was given importance. The common man—the worker, the labourer and the tiller and so on—was not made to realize the importance of religion and higher values of life for his own progress. In other words religion was not taken by its leaders to the common man.

We have given in brief the nature of the challenge that faced India at the time of Renaissance. We shall also see what were the tasks before the earnest, able, and enthusiastic leaders of the awakening.

1. In order to ensure peace and co-existence among people of different religious faiths and ultimately to strengthen the unity of the nation, the universality of various religions, in other words, the universal aspect of religions had to be stressed upon.

2. The challenge in general had to be met consistent with the inherent culture of India and 'by reinterpreting it in modern terms in an understandable and convincing manner.'

3. "Lost confidence had to be restored in spirituality and in its potency as a life-giving and life-sustaining power."[6]

4. Status of women had to be enhanced by giving them equal opportunities to develop themselves to be men's noble partners in life.

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6. R. R. Diwakar, *Paramahamsa Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 33.

5. The harmful caste-distinctions had to be counteracted. Everyone had to be given his right to pursue in the spiritual path.

Earnest and remarkable efforts were taken in those days by highly enlightened and powerful personalities. The chief of them were Raja Rammohan Roy (1744-1832), Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), Saint Ramalingar (1823-1874) and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886).

The great awakening was launched by Raja Rammohan Roy. A man of high accomplishment and of iron will, he was able to begin the heroic effort. He founded the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal. His attempts were mainly directed to a 'fusion' of Hinduism and Christianity. Interpreting the Vedas in his own way he declared that 'Idolatry' was a corruption of Hinduism. His major contribution to the awakening was his founding of "a Church for the congregational worship of the one True God, where all sorts of people, whatever their denomination or creed, could assemble, where Hindus, Mahomedans and Christians were all alike welcome to unite in the adoration of their Supreme and Common Father."

The Brahmo Samaj also protested against the priestly class which had developed vested interests. The Samaj set its face against some of the glaring social evils of those days such as *Sati* (the self-immolation by widows). Rammohan himself got it banned by the British Government. The Samaj envisaged a number of reforms. The fact that "the sponsors of the Samaj were naturally influenced in some respects by the other two prevailing faiths in India, namely, Islam, and Christianity" is obvious.

The Samaj was strengthened by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen. It did memorable service to effect the new awakening under their leadership.

Another remarkable movement of the nineteenth century was the Arya Samaj. It was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. It played a significant role in the Indian Renaissance. Its field of service was Punjab and other parts of Northern India.

It also set its face against idolatry. "It fought as much against the evils in Orthodox Hinduism as against Christianity and Islam, which were taking advantage of those evils to propagate their own religion and get converts. It also directed its attack mainly against some of the current ideas and evils such as multiplicity of gods and goddesses, idea of 'avatars', ancestor worship, doctrine of maya, the caste system, child marriage, inferior status of women, fatalism, belief in Puranas and Tantras, meaningless rituals and so on. On the positive side, it stood for the infallibility of Vedas, their propagation among all Hindus and also in the world, four 'varnas' not by birth but by function and so on."

The Arya Samaj wielded more influence in North India than the Brahmo Samaj. Though it had much in common with the latter, efforts taken by Keshab Chandra Sen to amalgamate it with Brahmo Samaj were not successful.

Amaury De Riencourt gives his impression on the mission of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj as follows :

> "...... In spite of their doctrinal divergences, the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj were both complementary, both symbols of an awakening of the head, one through an attempted synthesis with West-Christianity, the other through an attempted return to the Vedic .... tradition of India .... One was more religious and reflective and universalist, the other more active and nationalistic .... All such movements were based on intellectual cogitations, set in motion by the impact of European culture, with little intrinsic emotional appeal except on purely nationalistic, almost xenophobic grounds. The emotional appeal proper, this

awakening of the heart rather than the head, could only come from the living depth of Hinduism as materialization of intense spirituality embodied in sainthood. Intellectual problems had to be raised to the higher level of life-problems, the word had to become flesh before a truly organic change could take place in Hinduism. This was the life work of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa."

This impression of Amaury De Riencourt on Sri Ramakrishna's life work applies to Saint Ramalingar's life-work also. While the awakening of the heart manifested in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings in the North, it manifested in the South, in the saint's life and mission of spreading the Path of Grace which insisted on doing compassionate service to all the beings of the world and stipulated compassion as the only way for deliverance.

First we shall state in brief Sri Ramakrishna's life-work. He did not found any institution or conduct any movement. But he gathered round him ardent, diligent, and devoted disciples like Narendra, later known as Swami Vivekananda. Ramakrishna was at once a saint and mystic. Though not educated in a school, he was a treasure-house of spiritual as well as worldly knowledge. Through self-directed 'sadhana' he realized the universal aspect of all religions and their fundamental unity. He was devotion incarnate. With overflowing devotion he worshipped, adored and meditated on Mother Kali. He learnt the Tantric 'Sadhanas' from a lady-guide named Bhairavi Brahmani and the Vedanta from an ascetic named Totapuri. He proclaimed the unity of all religions and the indispensability of service to humanity. He never attacked idolatry or any other belief in the Hindu fold. He lived the philosophy he taught.

His message of service to the humanity at large attracted many a young man and made them devote themselves for the noble cause. Ramakrishna Mission was later

founded by Swami Vivekananda, and it spread its branches not only in India but also in Europe and America.

Just thirteen years before Sri Ramakrishna was born, Saint Ramalingar saw the earth. Though contemporaries they had not the chance to meet one another. But their life 'sadhanas', visions, experience and message have much in common. Saint Ramalingar's missionary spirit is evident from his appeal to the Lord.

> "I should go to all the worlds and all the places and hallow Thy Name."

He had a clear perception of the purpose of his life on the earth. He records his ideal briefly and clearly. His was to reform all the worldly whose life was lacking in the harmony between thought and deed, and make them join the 'Sanmarga Sangam' in order to attain the Divine here and now. He declared that God earmarked his life for this purpose.

He was an embodiment of compassion and he was not for discarding it for any reason. On the other hand if compassion was to be taken away from him, his life also would come to an end. So intense was his love for the humanity at large and the other living creatures.

He never believed in individual or personal salvation. But, through his direct experience he realized that compassion and service to the fellow-souls are the only way to attain God's Grace. This realization at hand, the distinctions of caste, religion, creed and nation grew pale in his purview. He could not tolerate any more the numerous quarrels which these artificial distinctions gave rise to and which disrupted the society. He felt in his inner domains the Lord's ordaining to show to the people of the world the universal path which would save them from being wasted; for so many were dead and gone wasting their lives on religious bickerings and debates without realizing that

all those were mere childish plays. He has recorded that the Lord ordered him thus:

> "Various religions spread to this day; yet the people of the world were dead and entered into darkness. Take my order to spread the Common Path of Suddha Sanmargam."[7]

He soared very high in spiritual realms but he did not shut himself in his seclusion. He moved among the people and rendered them medical service. This is testified by some of his letters. The sanctuary for eternal service, established by him at Vadalur, is a monument of his service-motto.

He wished to guide the people of the whole world in the Path of Grace which is free from violence of any sort. He delivered his message of *'The right for integration of all souls through soul love'* through lectures, essays, heart-melting poems of mellifluous style and melodious songs. He insisted on *Universal Brotherhood* as the only relation that the people of the world should have among themselves and with other living beings. He held them both as the chief ideals of the religion he preached. He insisted on the universal and spiritual aspects of religion. He aimed at the unity of all religions, as ordained by the Lord. He exhorted the people to set aside all their differences and live in amity and peace promoting congenial relationship with one another. He gave a clarion call to the humanity at large to follow the Universal Path which is free from the obsessions of differences in caste, faith and religion.

Literary Background :

We have hitherto traced the historical setting of the saint's life and service. Since he carried out his mission also through literary activities it is in place to trace the literary background against which his literary creations rose

7. *Thiruvarutpa,* 6th Book, Part II, 1st poem, 27th stanza.

with a new vigour and inspiration. This will help evaluating his contribution to Tamil literature.

Introduction of printing press in Tamil Nadu by the Europeans was made in the sixteenth century. But only in the nineteenth century the Indians established printing press and brought into print many an old Tamil literary work and new books. As the price of the printed books was cheaper than the hand-written palmirah leaves the poor people also were enabled to obtain books. This was of very great help in spreading education and literature among the common men. Because they began to read books, it was obligatory on the part of writers to employ a simple style. This explains the extremely simple style of the *Thiruvarutpa.*

Another advantage of the printing press was that it enabled production of prose-works. Some Christian missionaries like Charles Theophilus Ewald Rhenius (1790-1838), Rev. William Taylor (1796-1878), Rev. S. Winfred, (1810-1879) Right Rev. Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), Rev. G. U. Pope (1820-1903), Samuel Bowell (1844-1900), Rev. W. Clerk, Rev. W.H. Drew, Rev. Henry Bower and Rev. Peter Percival wrote prose books in Tamil, explaining Christianity and its principles. Rev. Peter Percival is reported to have printed and published the first weekly Tamil newspaper at Madras in 1855.

Muslim Tamil scholars also wrote prose books in Tamil. There were some poets also among them. Kunangudi Mastan (1788-1835), Nayinar Pulavar, Sekana Labbai, Pichai Ibrahim Pulavar (1863-1908), Abdul Kadhar Rawther, Nayinar Mohamed Bhava and Hamid Ibrahim, known as Vannak-kalanjiyap-pulavar are worth noting.

Among the Hindu poets of that period Mahavidwan Tirisirapuram Meenakshisundaram Pillai was a renowned scholar. He contributed profusely to poetic literature by way of enriching it with his 'prabhandas' and 'sthala-

puranas'. His poetic style cannot be said to be as simple as that of *Thiruvarutpa.* They were taught by him to a host of students who always gathered round him. He was a great Tamil teacher, besides. Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer owes his education in Tamil literature to this great poet.

Arumuga Navalar (1823-1879) is remarkable among those who contributed much to Tamil prose literature. He wrote both for scholars and children. *Periyapurana Vachanam, Thiruvilayadal Purana Vachanam* and *Pala Padam* (four volumes) are worth noting. He did monumental work in the field of publication of literary books. He also did memorable work in spreading Saivism and Saivite literature among the people.

Vedanayakam Pillai is another celebrity of the nineteenth century. He was at once a poet and a prose-writer. He produced the first Tamil novel.

These scholars and poets belonging to various religions produced literature both in prose and poetry by way of elucidating their own religions and philosophies. Hence the literary atmosphere was replete with religious writings, discussions and debates. Saint Ramalingar has recorded in his poem entitled, 'Kuṭumba Koram' his impression of these activities. To put his impression in brief, the discussions were vitiated by biased notions and dogmatism.

Against this background which gave fillip to produce literature of simple style in order to mainly educate the people in religion and philosophy, and to assert the genuineness of the respective religions, and the superiority of a certain philosophy over the others the saint came forward with his literature on the Common Path, placing stress on the universal aspect of all religions. He never composed poems in the direction of enriching the repertory of Tamil literature with 'prabandas' like *Pillaittamil, Kalampakam, Antathi,* etc., and bigger works like *Sthalapuranam* which were the favourites of Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram

Pillai. He concentrated on educating and enlightening the people in general morality and in the eminence of service. His literary creations, by virtue of their common strains got a general appreciation from the people of all sects. He himself recorded this fact in one of his poems. Thus among the sectarian literatures which contradicted with one another, his literary creations stood aloof preaching the universal religion. His poetry reminds one of the heart-melting hymns of *Thiruvachakam*, *Thevaram* and *Divyaprabandam*. Just as these hymnal literature of the past his poetry was also inspired and supported by a rich spiritual experience. It emanated from the depths of intense spirituality embodied in sainthood. It flowed with simple, lucid and mellifluous style, replete with diction of common parlance.

Let us conclude this chapter with the remark that at a period when there was utter necessity for leaders who would bring forth an awakening in South India and unite the people of all castes and faiths, and when there was an urge among the commonale to know something in religion and spirituality, through simple and enlightening literature, Saint Ramalingar rose to the occasion and began the renaissance in a remarkable manner.

5. A SOCIAL REFORMER

The condition of the saint's contemporary society was described in the last chapter. We also saw that the saint held service to fellow-souls as his motto. He deemed it an important service to remove the age-long obsession of caste system which keeps apart the people labelling them high and low. He attacked caste system more vehemently than any other religionist or spiritualist of the previous ages. His attack is directed to the four main castes, namely Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. He derides these divisions along with the various modes of life connected with each of them. He refuses to accept the theory of high and low castes. He says that the Lord revealed to him that there is nothing like high caste; that high caste is not distinguished by the colour of the skin and that all the distinctions of caste and modes of life are childish plays.

In another place he gives a severe blow on caste system saying that it is a ghost. In some other places he derides it saying that it is a farce. He also condemns as rubbish, books which suggest and advocate many subdivisions within the main castes and religions. He wants the people to treat all as equals. He declares that higher spiritual knowledge and attainments will only be possible for those who make up their mind earnestly to rejoice in giving equal treatment to their equals and the low. He expresses his wish that the present social set up with its manifold strata be changed and a new one be formed where no difference will exist. To effect this change-over he does not suggest any violent methods. In fact, he advocates non-

violence to its core. He had understood full well the fact that if social reform is to be permanent and beneficial to the society, it ought to be based on religious reform. So he took up religious reform as his mainstay, and gave the world the universal religion the philosophy of which never accepts any distinctions whatever. The grounds on which the universal religion refutes caste system and other distinctions are the following:

1. All distinctions except those of caste and faith relate to the physical body. They are meaningless in the spiritual level.

2. All physical bodies are created by one God. Hence it may be against His Will to distinguish high and low births.

Although philosophy steers clear in this regard and declares that there is no difference whatever in the spiritual level, castes and creeds continue to exist as social evils. Religionists did not take steps to eradicate this evil. On the other hand they safeguarded and strengthened it.

The saint attacked caste system vehemently. In fact, with his movement of 'Sanmarga' which condemned caste system and all other artificial differences, the awakening of South India began.

There is no evidence to think that either he or the 'Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sangam' established by him led a movement or campaign against caste system and other social evils.

The manner in which he attacked the society which made much of castes is worth noting. He felt sorry for the people who talked tall of their respective castes and religions. He categorically stated that they were wasting their precious time in maintaining and safeguarding the interests of their castes and that they were going to lose

much by their own policies.

It is evident that he viewed even the caste-minded with a compassionate outlook. He never wounded anybody with harsh words. But at the same time he was very firm in his conviction that the theory of castes was a farce. He declared that there could be nothing like 'high caste' in this world, for the people of the high caste die alike as those of the 'low caste'. Only those who attain the good body that knows no waning, old age, or death can be said to belong to 'high caste'. He appealed to the people to discard their castes in favour of the 'Sanmargam'. In order to dissuade the people from attaching much importance to the castes he pointed out to them that all their 'castes' are of very little importance. "They are like groups of worms and insects," he says. The reason is obvious.

He attacked caste system, chiefly for the reason that it is against the principle of the integration of all souls through love. He wished that congenial relations should exist between groups of people. The castes and the quarrels for reasons concerned with castes were marring this relation. They disrupted the whole society.

Next, his attack was directed against the materialistic tendencies of the people. In their mad race after wealth and pompous life they ignored spirituality and human values. They ignored the poor and destitute who asked for help. They were always eager to accumulate and possess wealth, but not to share it with the suffering. The saint set his face against these relentless people and condemned them in two ways:

1. He directly censured them for their unsympathetic attitude towards the poor and suffering.

2. He took the blame upon himself and in a confessing mood he divulges all the evil tendencies of

the materialistic-minded people and their unsympathetic treatment of the poor, as if he has done all these cruel deeds.

The greedy people are given direct censure by him. The 32nd poem of the III Volume of the sixth book is an example. In this poem he addresses them thus:

"You boast yourselves that you are living a life full of honour and prestige. You do not seem to think of God to pray to him when your physical and mental faculties are intact. You move among people, wrapped in silk and bedecked with jewels. You will not be pleased even to look at the hungry in the street. Oh, mad people, how much you take away from the world?"

In another stanza of the same poem he addresses the people who do money-lending business and points out their selfish and covetous nature. He complains that they have made it a point to charge compound interest on the loans they give. They hoard tons of money but never give away in charity. They do not stir out lest they should be asked for help. They do not and will not cast their eyes on the surroundings. Poverty and suffering around do not seem to move them.

In another poem which he makes in a confessing mood he blames himself as being covetous of taking away the dwellings of the poor for the money they are liable to pay him. It is evident that he did not run any money-lending business. Hence we have to take this reference as related to others who are at it.

In yet another poem he blames himself as lodging a desire for taking away all the tiny pieces of cultivated land belonging to the poor tillers. He says that he demanded of the poor people living on mere gruel costly things like boiled milk with sugar. He adds that he will not give

them even a small help.

All these expressions of direct and indirect censures do serve as eye-openers and try to make the relentless yield and change their outlook and come forward with a helping hand.

The saint grieved at the poverty prevalent in the society. The economic inequality in the society in so far as it has left a few people with abundance of wealth and the others in utter poverty, depriving them of their poor share of food unnerved him. He felt for the suffering of the poor so intensely that he could not take his food. He says that he felt as if his mind and body were burning. He could not tolerate this state of affairs any more. He appeals to the Lord to have mercy on the people so as to remove such kind of disharmony.

While reprimanding the pitiless rich the saint also expresses his disapproval of the people of certain groups in the society, praising them unreservedly with selfish motives. He records his disapproval in an indirect reference, in which he takes the blame on himself. He asks the Lord,

> "My Lord, is it for going to the rich and flattering them by paying false tributes you nurtured me?"

He disapproves of the poor approaching the rich for help.

For his own part he did not ask the rich for help. One of his letters to Irukkam Rathina Mudaliar reveals that he refused to ask for a certain help from one Somu Chettiar, despite the request of the former. He also dissuades him from approaching the rich for any help.

All these go to show that he indirectly condemns the economic state of the society in which people have to beg others for the necessities of life. He confined himself with indicating the evil. He did not lead a campaign against

the rich. But when opportunity came he established the Sanctuary for Eternal Service at Vadalur to feed all the poor irrespective of their sex, caste, religion and nation. So his reform was on the positive side. He launched a non-violent project to eradicate hunger from the society. He wanted his example to be followed by others.

Another social evil which he wants the people to get rid of is debauchery. The first, second and fifth books of *Thiruvarutpa* abound in poems, in which he depicts himself as a victim to that evil. Poems in similar strains are also found in the sixth book. We can classify such poems in all these books into two classes:

1. Poems reprimanding his own mind for lodging carnal desire.
2. Poems appealing to the Lord for purification from the sin of debauchery.

As shown in the chapter on the saint's life, he was doubtless free from sensual desire. The poem entitled 'A short appeal from the son of God' stands to testify this. Hence, the purpose with which he composed many a poem in this strain may be that of pointing out to the society its blemishes forcibly enough, in order to reform it. By a process of sympathetic identification he depicts himself as a victim of this age-long perilous evil of the society. It may be his sincere hope that his heart-melting poems may serve as an eye-opener to the society. It may be held that being an embodiment of compassion, he did not resort to forceful methods like conducting a campaign against any social evil. Instead he insisted on the positive side of moral conduct and stipulated a four-fold discipline as constituting the Universal Path he preached. This discipline, while demanding of one, a moderate control over one's senses insists on his treating equally every other in the society as well as in the world at large. At the same time it stipulates that one should deem every other as embodying Godly Presence. The fact that his is a practical reli-

gion is testified to by this integral discipline which concentrates on the full growth of the personality of man. Through this discipline his religion provides a re-oriented, spiritual background for the social reform that he intends to make. It is in place to remember here Dr. Bhandarkar's words referred to earlier. He is reported to have said, if social reform was to be permanent and beneficial to Hindu society, it ought to be based on religious reform.

The saint attacked the caste system also on the ground that it proves to be a hindrance to the promotion of compassion, which, according to him, is the only way to attain the final deliverance. His own experience proves this. It will be seen, later, that only on getting God's guiding Light (Realization of God's Grace) he declares:

> "Here is the dawn of the graceful Guiding Light (*Arutjyothi*) of the Lord; bickerings on account of differences in caste, strata, religion and faith have come to an end."

This experience of his reveals the importance of religion—especially, its spiritual aspect—in providing a suitable background for making permanent social reform. It will be explained later, in the chapters on the saint's Religion and Philosophy and on his experience how he combined the spiritual progress of men and the service for the general uplift of the society and for freeing it from the clutches of poverty and disease. Thus he makes religion and humane service inseparable. Thus he frees religion from the debating scholars and from the orthodox who attach much importance to rituals and takes it to the common man. In this context his line, *kallarkkum katravarkum kalippu arulum deyvam* (The Lord gives bliss equally to the mass and the enlightened) acquires significance.

God is the Father of the whole humanity and other beings and He showers his Grace on all, without making any

discrimination. Why should man discriminate between humans? Hence the saint declares that 'the Hall of Wisdom' (Satya Gnana Sabha) at Vadalur will give more inspiration to those who sincerely treat all as equals. His religion strongly advocates equality of men and this is an important social reform the saint envisaged. In his view it is not only a social reform but also a social atmosphere conducive to healthy spiritual progress.

In this chapter on the saint's social reforms it may not be out of place to mention his variegated services to the society. The medical help he rendered to the poor and others are worth noting. The fact that he was well-versed in herbal medicine is evident from the list of medicines he has given with the title, 'Oshathi guna akarathi'. It is learnt from one of his letters that he attended on two patients who had come to him for treatment. Another letter of his informs of his preparation of a certain medicine to be given to the poor free of cost. It is reported by him that the medicine got spoiled and that he vexed to see the poor who were in need of that medicine. It is also learnt from his letters that he attended on one Ramakrishna Reddiar at Karunkuzhi who was suffering for a very long time from a certain ailment. His reluctance to discontinue his service to the people of the vicinity of Chidambaram and Cuddalore was one of the chief reasons for his postponing his trip to Madras despite the repeated requests of Irukkam Rathina Mudaliar and others. Thus he lived the philosophy of service he taught.

6. IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

Literature is a record of human experiences. It is a record, not in the sense of a mere compilation of data, but in the sense that it "stabilizes the passing experience into something both momentous and permanent". Saint Ramalingar has recorded all his life experiences in *Thiru-varutpa*. A complete and comprehensive study of his experiences in both the worldly and spiritual levels can be made from his literary works.

This chapter endeavours to bring out how he communicates his experiences through the media of poetry and prose. Poetry for him was not just a medium of communication. What C. Day Lewis says about the "Ancient Mariner" of Coleridge is applicable in the case of his poems also. "The poem does not merely embody a complex of experiences," says Day Lewis, "it is an experience." The saint felt the making of poetry as a part of his experience. His poems are really an experience for the reader also.

As was said earlier, all his experiences including even those which he had in his boyhood, found their resonance in sweet and remarkable poetry. His poems marked the beginning of a new epoch in the literary history of Tamil Nadu. He began with glorifying the Lord, feeling it as an integral part of his worship. As worship gradually came to stay in his life in all its senses, he did not confine his poetic activity within the spheres of invocation and glorification but extended it to beg for the Lord's intercession on behalf of himself and others, for communicating his

experiences with the Lord at various levels, and for drawing the attention of the people towards his significant experiences as a result of which he emerged with the universal religion. In all these fields of his poetic activity, he felt not only the necessary poetic emotion, but also, as stated earlier, a part of his experience with the Lord. Recalling the poem he composed in his boyhood, he says, "It is the Lord that made me sing His glories in colourful poetry even in my youth." On another occasion, perhaps in an exalted state of experience, he feels proud of being corrected by the Lord Himself, while he sang about Him. At a certain stage when he reaches a higher realm in God-experience and a parallel eloquence in communicating through poetry, he declares that the Lord approbated his poetic dedications, as He did in the case of the scriptures. He found that he grew spiritually through his poetic activity. At the summit of his experience—the God-realization, as he puts it—he felt the Lord not only as in communion with himself, but also as in merger with his poems and their melody. "The Lord gives me the diction for singing Him", says he.

These statements of his may be viewed as substantiating the fact that poetry was part and parcel of his experience. So, the analysis of the literary merits of his poems may be made with this fact as the background. An analysis of his experience brings to light three aspects, namely,

1. his confession on his own behalf and on behalf of others,
2. his yearning for the Lord's Grace, and
3. the fulfilment of this yearning.

These aspects of his experience form the subject-matter of the major part of his poetic works.

The chief literary devices he makes use of as a means of driving home his experiences are imagery and symbol-

ism. Of course, there are other auxiliary devices he makes use of, like alliteration, rhyme, repetition of words and phrases, assonance and rhythm. All these, along with the diction congruous with his purpose and modern in nature, go to make his style, which marks the beginning of a new epoch in the literary history of Tamil Nadu.

Imagery:

Let us first take up the imagery in his poetry and study the different ways in which it is used by him. "The image is the constant in all poetry, and every poem is itself an image", writes Day Lewis. He continues: "Trends come and go, diction alters, metrical fashions change, even the elemental subject matter may change almost out of recognition, but metaphor remains the life principle of poetry, the poet's chief test and glory."[1] "Imaging is, in itself, the very height and life of poetry", says Dryden. These ideas stress the importance of imagery in poetry. "The use of imagery really turns on the perception of likeness in difference and difference in likeness," writes Stanley C. Glassey. In this way simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, allegory and antithesis are considered to be the chief forms of imagery. Association of words also has its place in producing effects of image in the mind's eye of the reader. Saint Ramalingar, it can be said, specialises in the fields of simile and metaphor.

Both these older forms of imagery have received different treatment from the poets of Tamil Nadu from the hoary past. The treatment by the classical, Sangam poets and that by the epic poets, namely Sekkizhar and Kambar, are noteworthy. The difference between the classical and epic poets in treating the simile and metaphor is chiefly of length. Whereas the images in Sangam poetry are noted for their intensity, those made use of in the epic poetry are noted for their boldness. This difference is mainly due to the change of form poetry chose in the epic period. "If there is any

1. *The Poetic Image*, page 17.

essential in imagery, it is not boldness, or intensity, but congruity—that the image should be congruous with the passionate argument and also with the form of the poem", writes Day Lewis. The treatment of simile and metaphor changes according to the style characteristic of each period and of each poet. In the hands of the saint these forms of imagery receive treatment in such a way as to have not only boldness, but also an elaboration. Intense images are not absent, but elaborate ones are characteristic of his poetry. Further, his images are fresh and full of evocative power.

(i) *Simile:*

Let us consider first his similes and try to substantiate this impression. The present analysis is proposed to be made having in mind the chief quality of the simile of being an image. Hence the proposed method has as its basis the nature of the images produced by different similes.

Contrasting images:

He says of himself:

"I am like the long leaf thrown in the dust-bin after being used for purposes of eating."

This simile evokes in us contrasting pictures of a leaf before and after being used for eating purposes. Features of contrast are manifold.

1. The leaf once taken from place to place carefully is now lying on the dust. That is, the leaf once dynamic now lies static.
2. The leaf once in demand and even offered a price now lies neglected.
3. While used for purposes of eating the leaf is embellished with food-stuffs but when thrown away it lies bare, making obvious the absence of food-stuffs.

This striking contrast gives the contrasting associations of one being carefully looked after once and being left unwanted and unnoticed after sometime; of one being in demand once and neglected after sometime and of one full of wealth and strength once and becoming wasted after sometime. This contrast excellently communicates the pathos of the situation. The poet here wants to depict a personality who once indulges in sensual pleasures to the fullest extent and consequently becomes wasted and hence neglected by society.

Vivid and elaborate images:

Both vividness and elaboration can be found in some of the images created by the saint's similes. For example, we can take the following one:

> "Just as a boy, the only son of a very rich man, kidnapped by some murderous thieves and left in the midst of so many thieves having swords, weeps with a lot of tears in his eyes, I, your son, walked off the track and got myself entangled in difficulties in this physical body and am stranded by the cruelties of the elements concerned."

Elaboration in similes is also used by the saint for purposes of suggesting a vivid contrast. In fact, this kind of simile is characteristic of him. Such similes cover the major portion of the stanzas of which they form a part. They are endowed with the nature of a description. For example, we can take two similes employed by him in two separate poems for purposes of expressing the bliss of communion with God.

The object compared in one of them is a specially prepared sweet, the ingredients of which and the method of preparing which are described vividly. Mangoes, jack fruits and plantain fruits are crushed separately and their juice distilled and mixed together. Sugar and powder of candy are added in plenty. Then pure honey, milk, co-

conut juice and some powder of green gram are mixed with it. Lastly, after adding sweet ghee, this mixture is taken to the stove and a sweet dish is prepared. The saint says, "Sweeter than this dish is the bliss of the Lord."

Elaboration in this simile is purposely used for making the contrast more vivid. By the effect of the contrast all the elaboration is transferred to the bliss of the Lord and also something ineffable is added to it. This is a device to express partly the ineffable. The reader is left to imagine for himself what would be the bliss of communion, if it is said to be sweeter than this specially made sweet. This is not a suggestion, for the bliss may be unknown to the reader. This is an incentive for imagination.

The other simile relates to the height of pleasure enjoyed by a couple and compares it with the Bliss of the Lord. For sometime lovers, they are recently married. The bride is a very young and chaste lady. They spend their time joyously at a cool grove one evening in the spring season. The place they have selected for their sojourn is near a flowery pond where a beautiful platform of 'Chandrakanta' stone is laid. They are on the platform and are seated on a cushion laid in a well-decorated bed-stead. Around the platform is a pandal of jasmine creepers. As dusk steals away, the full moon begins to spread its silvery rays. The south-wind blows gently. Some are singing melodiously to the accompaniment of a well-stringed harp. The couple enjoys this atmosphere to the fullest extent. The chaste lady makes the occasion more graceful by her loving words. The happiness of this young couple is, no doubt, very high. "But will it liken the bliss of the Holy Feet of the Lord" asks the saint.

The elaboration made of this simile may be noted for the minute details it consists of. For instance, the bride is described to have been the lady-love of the bridegroom and as one endowed with chastity and blooming youth. In fact, no feature of the Nature described is left without adjuncts that suit the occasion which heightens the plea-

sure of the couple. For instance the evening is described as belonging to spring season. For, the evenings of the other seasons will be unfit for outing. The grove is described as a cool one, and the pond as a flowery one. The platform is said to be made of 'Chandrakanta' stone, for this kind of stone is known in literature for its response to the moonshine. (The response is to be in the form of a slight melting). The harp is described to be a well-stringed one. This means that the harp is equipped with all the strings representing all the seven musical notes. It is to be taken that a tune endowed with all the seven notes is played on the harp. For it is obvious that this kind of tune, 'pan' as it is known in the musical tradition of Tamil Nadu, is more rich in music than the other kinds which are made out of lesser number of notes. These details are given in order to make known the justification of the enjoyment. These go to show that there is an atmosphere conducive to enjoyment.

The effect of this simile is the same as that of the previous one. The more elaborate the simile, the more vivid is the contrast suggested.

Suggested similes:

A form of 'suggested simile' is also found in the saint's poems. Of course, this is the traditional one. Tradition calls it as 'eduthukkattu uvamai'. In this the objects or ideas compared will be arranged one after another without any mark of comparison. The saint introduces a novelty in the tradition of 'eduthukkattu uvamai' viz., of giving two or three comparisons in a succession forming one simile. We meet with successive comparisons forming one simile in Poet Kambar's epic. But they are open similes.The saint's simile is as follows:

"People would nourish even a snake with milk; they would not cut down the tree in their neighbourhood even if it happens to be a margosa tree; even if the calf they rear leaps on themselves and tries to run away they

will go after it taking a little rope in their hands. Please accept me as your devotee."

This is one of his appeals to the Goddess. This simile is a suggestive one, not only because the marker of comparison is absent, but because the nature of the appellant to which the comparisons are made is left to be inferred from suggestion evoked by the images.

(ii) *Metaphor:*

Let us pass on to the study of metaphors found in the *Thiruvarutpa*. Morjorie Boulton writes: "Metaphor is the very life of poetry; metaphor (and kindred modes of speech such as simile and personification) is imagery". Stanley C. Glassey explains that metaphor is simile carried a stage further, a simile without the comparing word, 'like' or 'as'. In metaphor, the objects compared are identified as one and the same. It can be said that *Thiruvarutpa* abounds more in metaphors than in similes. Proceeding on the lines of distinguishing figures of speech according to the types of images they evoke, we can distinguish two major kinds of metaphors from among the figures of speech found in the *Thiruvarutpa*. Both of these kinds have partial or full originality about them. The second kind may well be said to be completely original and as characteristic of the saint's style. It can be studied under various sub-headings for it offers various shades.

Metaphors evoking images of single visual objects:

The saint addresses the Goddess as a 'divine flower'. In another place he addresses Lord Muruga as a 'new flower in which the fragrance is knowledge'. As this metaphor is also to be noted for its captivating style we may give it here in transliteration: *potam manakkum puthumalar*. Instances of employing metaphors comparing flowers to God or Goddess are very rare in the previous literature, whereas they are many in number in the *Thiruvarutpa*. Not only the images of flowers, but also those connected with flowers are the most frequent associations that

the saint's poems give rise to. He addresses Lord Siva as 'a flower smelling fresh'. In another place he mentions the mind as a flower blossoming in a certain season. He uses the word 'blossoming' to evoke the association of 'appearing'. For instance, he says of life on this earth as 'one blossomed on the earth.' Here the word, 'blossoming' gives rise to a mental image of a life starting and coming to full growth.

Image within Image:

It gives much aesthetic pleasure to come across and appreciate imagery especially when it is specialised in its various aspects as is done by the saint. Image within image is one of these aspects, that is, an image inclusive of another, both of them being associated with one major object to which comparison is made. For instance, the saint addresses Lord Muruga as 'the ocean in which twelve flowers of eyes' blossom. This succession of metaphors gives rise to the image of an ocean which includes within itself the image of twelve flowers. In this succession, the image that includes is first in the order. The reversed order may also be found in the saint's poems. The very first stanza of the poem entitled, 'The wreath on the realization of Grace' provides an example. He addresses the Lord as 'the lamp of grace', 'the flame of grace', and 'the light of grace'. Here the lamp, the flame, and the light are employed as comparisons for the grace of the Lord. Among the images evoked in succession by these metaphors, that of the light is inclusive of those of others. Again, the image of the flame includes within itself that of the lamp. The reason is that the light occupies more space than the flame does and the flame, by virtue of its luminousness, occupies more space than the lamp does. Even though the lamp supports the other two the fact is this. We are reminded here of the line in *Tiruvachakam* which consists of three similar metaphors giving rise to images in the right order, i.e., presenting first the image that includes the other two. The line addresses the Lord as the 'light, the flame and the lamp.'

We can also have an example in the saint's poems for the right order of images. It is provided by a poem in the fourth book. One of its stanzas says that the mind meditating upon the Lord will become a fully ripened fruit, its juice, and its taste. The succession of metaphors is an expression of the saint's experience, and it is obvious that the image of the fruit includes that of the other too. Of course, the image of the taste is not a visual one. It relates to the tongue. But both visual image and the image relating to any other sense organ are pictures in the mind's eye. According to I.A. Richards the image need not resemble the sensation it represents. He contends that apart from "the sensory qualities of the imagery there are more fundamental qualities upon which its efficacy in modifying the rest of the experience depends." He writes further: "Since images may represent sensations without resembling them, and represent them in the sense of replacing them, as far as the effects in directing thought and arousing emotion go, differences in their mimetic capacity become of minor importance." His opinion may hold good in the interpretation of this succession of metaphors. The experience of the mind undergoing radical changes which involve its gradual dissolution is not resembled by any of the images of the fruit, its juice, and its taste. But these images do represent, by virtue of some qualities of theirs more fundamental than their sensory qualities, and by virtue of their succession, the experience of the dissolution of mind. To explain: the appearance of a fully ripened fruit is different from that of a fruit. When it is crushed and the juice is taken, even that changed appearance vanishes. Then, in the course of tasting, the juice disappears. It is the taste that survives it for some more time. This is the gradual dissolution of the fruit. Its solidity has gone and it survives as a taste and at last the taste too goes off. From being concrete the fruit becomes abstract and then nothing. It is the fundamental qualities of these images and the succession in which they present themselves in the mind's eye that are responsible for their apt representation of the gradual dissolution of the mind.

Personification:

Let us now pass on to the study of personification employed by the saint.

Like Thiruvalluvar, the saint personifies human qualities like valour, shamefulness and sympathy. He says, "Manly valour will laugh at me." Continues he, "Shamefulness will be ashamed to see me." He says further, "Sympathy will die of fear even on hearing my name." These words are said by him with a sense of extreme humility. In some places he personifies suffering also. The lines are as follows:

(1) "Suffering eats me up."

(2) "I am the stage on which act all the sufferings of the world."

(3) "My suffering will run away without even taking leave of me."

He does not confine personification within a line or two in a poem. Elaboration being his typical style, he extends the limits of personification and devotes even a full poem to describe the various aspects of a chosen abstract thing. In these places he can be said to employ allegory. For instance, he personifies the mind as a naughty boy and describes its various leanings as his mischief. In one full poem consisting of 20 stanzas he personifies his mind, as a foolish, playful and brutish boy and describes its activities in four stanzas. Similarly he personifies in that poem his intellect, 'maya' (the source material of the world), 'Karma', the source of ignorance, slumber, fear, wrath, hunger and death as evil humans. In another poem he personifies the sensual appetites as burglars who broke into his house and roused the mind, 'the servant', and committed felony with his help.

Such personifications and allegory relating to one's own evil tendencies and aptitudes are effectual, for they are brought forth as images of evil persons and their subtle

aspects are vividly described as in the case of human doings. Most of the personifications employed by the saint relate to the evil and ignorant side of man. The brighter side is not altogether ignored by him. The same mind of his, which he described once as a boy, most playful and brutish, is transmuted into the most helping factor, consequent on his experiences in the higher realms of spirituality. Hence he personifies it as his confidant. Echoes of this personification are found in the poems he devotes to singing his love for the lord in terms of nuptial relations. There he personifies his mind as the lady-companion.

One long poem of his, consisting of 412 lines, may be said to be an allegorical poem. The theme he chose is the personality of man. Its various aspects are described in allegorical language, thus being made to enact a drama before the mind's eye of the reader. In personification the image is presented as that of a human being. But in allegory, the human images verily enact a drama. So it can be said that imagery has its fullest development in allegory. The poem entitled, 'Kuṭumba Koram' is an allegorical poem of the saint. As it is presented in the form of a letter written to one of his friends, it is included by Balakrishna Pillai in the volume of his letters.

In this poem, the source of ignorance, the source-material of the world and the 'karma' which the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy calls 'mummalam', (impurities tripartite) are personified as the three wives of 'the man' who in turn is described as the head of the family. Ignorance, the mind, the intellect, the other aspects of the mind, and the three 'gunas' are personified as his children born to him by his three wives. The house where this family resides is the body. The three balancing factors of the body, namely the 'pittham, the vayu and the silettumam', are personified as the owners of the house. Periodical food is the rent paid to them. With all this the poem proves to be a fine piece of allegorical poetry, not to speak of its other values, philosophical, ethical and satirical.

Symbolism:

Let us pass on to the study of the saint as a symbolist poet. It is on account of symbolism being used by him that a part of his poetry is difficult to understand. To the question why he should be called a symbolist, we can answer quoting C. M. Bowra's words on French symbolists which are as follows:

> "....because they attempted to convey a supernatural experience in the language of visible things, and therefore almost every word is a symbol and is used not for its common purpose but for the associations which it evokes of a reality beyond the senses."

These words are also true in the case of the saint. He had many experiences, being equipped with super-consciousness. They were not cognizable by the senses. One of his addresses to the Lord testifies to this. He calls the Lord "The impressionless impression felt during a sight-less sight."

The sight of the Lord that he had was not one among many sights but something above them. "It belonged to pure sight, not to the senses". He conveys mystic experiences by using visible things as symbols. The details of his experiences will be studied in a later chapter. Here it is proposed to bring out how he reduces his impressions and sensations to order and turns them into art, thus making poetry out of his experience, which he does not share with many of his contemporaries. Very few Tamil poets, apart from him, use symbols in poetry. Saint Thirumular may be considered as the first among them. The ninth 'tantra' of his treatise contains a chapter entitled, 'Sunya Sambashanai' in which all the verses, 70 in number, are instances of symbolism in poetry. One of them is as follows:

> "There are palmyrahs, four in number, in the meeting place of six streets. Placing an unclimbable ladder against them I began to climb on them and saw the seven seas."

In this verse, the six streets are the symbols of the six centres of experiences in the human body. The four palmyrahs are the symbols of the four petals of the 'muladhara', the first centre of experience. The ladder is the symbol of the 'Sulumunai nati' (sushumna) in the spinal chord. The 'seven seas' is the symbol of endless re-incarnations. In later ages, mystic poets widely known as the 'siddhas' followed the tradition given by Thirumular. One of them, Kuthambaisiddhar by name, is known to have made the juice of the mango and the coconut into symbols. Another of them uses the flower-grove, the ascetic, the potter, and the pot as symbols of a soul coming to live in a physical body and exploiting it until it breaks down. The experience and philosophy of the 'siddhas' are ably conveyed by them to posterity through symbolic language. They are really the masters of this art. A close study of 'Siddha literature', it is hoped, will bring to light many aspects of symbolism in Tamil poetry. In the nineteenth century when French poetry began to undergo a change which the critics call the symbolist movement, our saint in India resorted to symbolism to convey his experiences in the higher realms of spirituality.

He takes some symbols of Saivism, but for the most part, he finds his own symbols. 'Sithsabai', 'Porchabai', 'koyil' are the chief among the symbols that he takes from Saivism. In Saivism all these are connected with the temple at Chidambaram. But the saint gives them different associations. In one place he says,

> "It has come to pass that both 'Sithsabai' and 'Porchabai' have become my own. All the celestials talk only of me. What is there for religions to deride me? All my sufferings caused by my birth have ceased to exist."

Thus he communicates his higher experiences of the Lord, which he names as 'Realization of God's grace,' and 'God-realization' respectively. He uses 'Sithsabai' as the symbol of his experience of the Lord's grace. This rare

experience will otherwise defy communication. Still more rare is the God-realization. It is absolutely ineffable. It is the goal of life according to the saint. By saying, "Sithsabai and Porchabai have become my own" he gives visual symbols to the things, to communicate which, word-symbols will be miserably inadequate. He describes the details of his God-realization in one of his musical compositions, using many more symbols. Before going to appreciate that song, let us study some of the symbols he uses at the period of his yearning for higher realization. They include the place called 'Chidambaram', its temple, its main tower, the entrance and the doors. But, used as symbols, they are intended to give different associations. In a poem of appeal to the Lord he says:

> "You helped me climb up all the steps leading to the place where you perform the transcendental dance. You showed me also the temple which is in the centre of the place. Further you made the door at the towered entrance of the temple open and, unfortunately for me, you again shut the door. I entreat you to open the door again."

Here, the steps are the symbols of the elements, 36 in number. This can be ascertained by some other references of the same experience, in which he explicitly says that he climbed up separately each of the 36 elements. The place of dance is the symbol of the unexplored soul. The temple is the symbol of the enlightened soul. Opening and closing the door symbolize the saint's vision of the Lord within his 'self' for a few moments.

In another place he uses the 'curtains' as symbols of the invisible powers that screen the perception of the soul into itself.

Now, let us take up his musical composition which through profuse symbols conveys his actual experience of the higher and the highest in spirituality.

The beginning line of the song indicates that the experience recorded in the poem was had by the saint at the golden dais in which the Lord performs his transcendent dance. Most of the poem covers his experience of 'his self'. At the end of the poem is narrated briefly his realization of grace and God-realization.

The narration is given as follows:

"There appeared a mount of light and while I approached it, a street was to be seen on it. I went along the street and found a platform at the centre. I climbed up the platform and entered a hall. Above the hall there were seven storeys. There were wonders awaiting me in each of those storeys. I cannot express exactly those wonders which I saw inside the storeys. In one of the flats I saw a white radiant pearl which suddenly changed into a blue gem. In another flat the blue gem changed into coral. In yet another flat an emerald changed into a sapphire. In still another, a great pearl turned into a diamond. In one of the flats corals changed into pearls. In another, various precious stones turned into golden gems. In yet another, these gems changed into crystal. Seeing these I climbed up the open terrace of the seven-storeyed palace. There I saw standing a golden pillar. I climbed it also. I am at a loss to express the wonders which I saw while climbing the pillar. I confronted thousands of goddesses in every step who tried to delude me. But by the Lord's help I continued my climbing, thereby gaining strength, and reached the top. On the top there was a link of Light unapproachable by the uninitiated. At the end of the link stood a golden temple. I entered the gate at which crores of gods and goddesses crowded. By colour they could be divided into five groups. They wondered at my arrival there. I passed them and reached another gate inside of which there were five personages. They showed me the onward path, treading which I reached a beautiful gate. Inside the gate

there were a God and a Goddess. With their guidance I proceeded further and reached the gate which was nearest to the chief Lord of the temple. When the doors of the gate opened, I saw my Mother, 'Ananthavalli'. She bestowed on me her grace. I drank also the nectar. Through her grace I reached in front of Lord 'Nataraja'. The attainment I got in His Presence the Lord alone knows."

In this picturesque, vivid narrative, new symbols along with the ones of Saivism are used. The mount of light is the symbol of the enlightened 'self'. The street, the platform, and the hall on the mount may be taken as the symbols of the particular direction the experience took. The seven-storeyed palace seems to be the symbol for the seven elements which are called 'vidya-tatvam', wwhich according to the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy are the links connecting the soul's faculties with the physical body. The change of colours in the gems may be taken as symbolic of the purification of these elements. The golden pillar symbolizes the link between 'vidya-tatvam' and 'Suddha maya tatvam'. The goddesses who confronted the saint when he climbed up the golden pillar are referred to by him elsewhere as those who help the officiating heads who, by the divine ordaining, keep the various elements moving. The five personages said to be at one of the gates may be taken as the symbol of five gods, namely, (1) the creator, (2) the preserver, (3) the destroyer, (4) Iswara and (5) Maheswara. The God and Goddess in the next gate may be taken as 'Sadasiva' (Shakti and Sivam in one form). The Mother referred to in the song is the Grace of the Lord. Since it is only through the Grace that the saint gets the highest experience of the Lord he says that he saw the court of the Lord with the help of the Mother. He feels helpless to describe what he experienced with the Lord. Hence his silence over it.

It is to be noted that he does not name any of the things indicated by his symbols. By the use of symbols he

suggests and evokes many associations in the reader. The associations may vary according to the suggestions made to the readers. Suggestion adds mystery to poetry.

One of the typical symbols he uses to indicate any experience, worldly or spiritual, is the 'space'. For him a 'space' symbolizes a stage of experience. The details of these 'spaces' will be analysed in a later chapter. We are concerned here with the poetry he makes with this symbol. Abstractions of philosophy which are not suited to poetry and very subtle experiences are picturesquely portrayed by him through the use of this symbol. With high felicity he depicts the transcendental philosophy and the experience thereof in the following line:

> "The bliss of keeping quiet having transcended the space within space."

The usage, 'space within space' indicates all that have to be transcended in order to attain the ultimate bliss. The attainment of this bliss also is symbolized by him as a 'space'. The difference is that it is not 'a space' within another. It consists of everything but it does not originate in anything. It is an endless, comprehensive, perfect, absolute experience. This fundamental, but transcendental Reality is tried to be felicitously brought by the saint into the limits of poetry, as it is brought into the hold of human love. He performs this magic with his symbol, 'the space'. His phrase viz., 'having transcended space within space' suggests the reaching of the originless space. Another line of his relating the same experience runs as follows:

> "The Lord and myself became one. The experience I had at that juncture is an all-comprehensive grand space."

This symbol produces successfully in the reader, suggestions, though varied according to his mental and spiritual developments, of the ineffable Reality. It gives to one

who may not know anything of spirituality the pleasure that ought to come by reading a good poem, by way of suggesting what Reality would be like. For, he may be well aware of what a space is in its ordinary sense. In him the phrase 'space within space' will create an awe and wonder and he will be interested to have more sips of the cup of poetry.

The saint connects every significant aspect of his experience with the symbol, 'the space.' So a student of the sixth book of the *Thiruvarutpa* is given the poetic experience of 'the spaces' so very often that he may be tempted to call its poetry a poetry of 'space.'

Another speciality in the symbolism of the saint is that he uses as a symbol a certain change in a certain object. For instance he sings,

> "In the heaven I saw dancing a peacock but, behold, it became a cuckoo."

There is no similarity whatsoever between a peacock and a cuckoo. Hence the change of the one into the other is wonder-inspiring. The rhythm in the words denoting these birds, viz., 'mayil' and 'kuyil' brought out by juxtaposing them adds some more stress to the change. This change in symbol suggests a radical and complete change in its counterpart which is intended to be conveyed through the song, the theme of which is 'the vision of the Lord.' It is suggested by the symbol that a thorough change takes place in the soul, or in its outlook or in some other and more things connected with it, before it gets the experience of the Lord. The vagueness as to what exactly changes into what, and the clarity that the change, whatever it may be, is radical and complete are the victory of the saint's symbolic poetry.

Symbol of nuptial love :

Another significant symbol found used by the saint in the poetic creations representing every stage of his rela-

tion with the Lord, beginning right from his boyhood, is that of describing in nuptial terms his love for the Lord and His responses. This provides a large scope for poetry made with spiritual experience as the subject. Further this proves to be the best-suited symbol for expressing the subtle feelings felt in the depths of one's heart for the Lord. For there is much similarity between sexual love and the love for the divine, both in the states of union and of separation. The happiness of union and the pangs of separation are similarly felt in both. Really speaking, this is not a single symbol, but a group consisting of many. Employing this symbol in poetry was first done by saint Gnanasambandhar. His successors developed it into a tradition. With the advent of 'prabandams' like 'the ula' and 'the kalambakam' this became a mere, lifeless symbol, having no experience to support it. It was treated merely as a literary mode, but not as a means of experiencing and of communicating. When there is no personal experience to be suggested, symbols become purposeless and lose their vital force in making the poetry recreating and evocative. Our saint, through his direct experience, revitalizes this symbol, and also introduces new turns in using it. So it is not possible to classify all his poems of nuptial relation according to the old classification offered by tradition. He has composed 36 poems and 4 musical compositions in this strain.

Let us now see how certain symbols connected with nuptial love are used by the saint by way of recreating the experience in the form of poetry. The chief symbol is that of indicating himself as a lady in love with the Lord. His early love for the Lord and His first response are expressed in the following line:

"The Lord garlanded me in my youth."

The symbol, 'garlanding' indicates the spirit of dedication on the part of the saint, who like a devoted wife enters the Lord's service. It also indicates the Lord's gesture

of acceptance. The act of garlanding brings in the association of marriage and conveys thereby the intimacy of the saint's relation to the Lord.

The long period of separation that followed 'the act of garlanding' found the saint in untold misery, and he gives expression to his grief by introducing another symbol, namely, the companion, and by telling her:

> "I simply garlanded him; but I am not really benefited anyway. He has not lovingly embraced me at least once."

He aspires for the union with the Lord which seems very difficult to get. His pining and yearning for it find varied expressions in many poems. In one of them the lady in love says that the women of her place speak ill of her, pointing out her 'fruitless life.' A married lady who does not live with her husband is generally a subject for gossip. This adds to her suffering. Used as a symbol it indicates the saint's consciousness of his neighbourhood which opines that he wastes his time in worthless acts.

In another poem he says:

> "The Lord married me while I was too young to know Him; but he does not turn up when I have attained enough maturity as to know him." He continues in the same poem, "He garlanded me when I did not know myself; today I know but he does not come and embrace me."

Here he uses the symbol, 'maturity' to represent his 'self-realization.' We shall learn later that his realization served him as the first step in his pure spiritual experience. A man knowing himself is mature enough to know the Lord, just as a matured girl is fit for nuptial relations.

As he desired, he had the union with the Lord. He describes the rare experience in terms of nuptial union. In

his poem entitled, 'The wreath on the realization of grace,' we can see many stanzas describing with poetic ecstasy his union with the Lord. These stanzas are in the form of an appeal from the lady-love to her husband. In one of them she says:

> "My sweet-heart! You are the bliss itself I enjoyed while you embraced me on a golden platform."

Here, the symbol is that the husband takes the wife in union with him. We have to take it that it indicates, not only the saint's spiritual union with the Lord but his physical union also. For he makes it specific in many places that the Lord embraced him physically also. The most significant of them are three in number. They are:

(1) he uses the phrase, 'external union';

(2) he says that his body gained the aroma of camphor all over consequent on his union with the Lord;

(3) he says that Lord is perceptible to all of his senses.

This aspect of his experience will be expatiated upon in a later chapter.

His poem entitled, 'The wreath on the experience' devoted to describing his ultimate realization is in the form of the lady-love addressing her companion. Here 'the companion' symbolizes the saint's mind. The companion is asked by 'the lady-love' to keep away while the Lord comes. This very aptly represents the fact that the mind has no place in the highest experience. Symbolically too the work of decorating 'the house' is assigned to this companion. The 'things' to be used in the decoration are also specified. 'Crores of lights' are asked to be lit; extreme care is demanded in using the proper liquid to be burnt in the lamps. The ghee from cows' milk is specified for this use.

The bliss of God-realization, i.e., 'the internal union with the Lord' in the saint's words, is also described by him in terms of the sexual union of lovers. 'The lady-love' gives her impression to her companion of her union with her husband. "While he embraced me" says she, "I forgot myself and my mind, intellect, etc. As he entered and mixed in my soul the great bliss I enjoyed is ineffable. Even the impression of it causes great pleasure which simply devours me."

This is how the unindicatable is indicated. Suggestion plays a unique part in such poetic recreations of an experience to explain which words hardly exist. A successful attempt is made by the saint to evoke in the reader ample suggestions through appropriate symbols. Spiritualism being the subject of his poetry throughout, it was incumbent on him to make use of symbols in the recreation of his experience.

Emotions :

"Emotions are primarily signs of attitudes and owe their great prominence in the theory of art to this," writes I. A. Richards. The saint's emotions are chiefly the outcome of his compassionate attitude to others, of his desire to get the Lord's grace, and of his higher experiences in getting 'self-realization' and subsequently the realization of the Lord's grace.

(i) *The Pathos* :

His extreme compassion towards others and his natural feeling of integration with them made him feel as his own all their sufferings, imperfections, drawbacks, vices, follies, sins and weaknesses, and this attitude and consequent emotions characterize his poetry and other works, especially in the period preceding his initiation into 'self-realization.' The first, second and fifth books of the *Thiruvarutpa* contain such poetry. He grieved over the sufferings, imperfections and sins, etc., as if they were his, and prayed to the Lord, with intense emotion, to enable him to get rid of

them. His prayers gushed out in the form of exquisite poetry, which by means of figurative and emotive language, depicts his emotions remarkably.

In one poem he grieves about lasciviousness. He creates an image by employing personification. Lasciviousness is personified as a hunter who earns his livelihood in the jungle of ignorance. "Driven to this jungle," the saint says, "I fell in the eyes of this hunter. He pursues me. I run for my life, but wherever I go he follows me. Thus, I am driven hither and thither. My Lord, I yearn for your grace, which will rescue me from this hazard. To whom else shall I confess my wretchedness? What shall I do if your grace is not forthcoming for my rescue? What punishment shall I inflict on myself?"

The pathos in this appeal for the Lord's grace is obvious. But, how it is created is our concern here. The image of his being driven hither and thither by the hunter suggests effectively the suffering caused by lasciviousness. Growing desperate, he yearns for the grace of the Lord which does not come easily. The situation is so delicate that he can confess his weakness to none other than the Lord. But He is not to be moved. "What shall I do now," he pines. It is not easy, too, to inflict any punishment on himself. He may put an end to his life. But it is not as easy to do as to think. The tenseness of this situation is exactly conveyed by the lines,

> "To whom else, my Lord, shall I confess? What shall I do (in this critical juncture)? What punishment shall I inflict on myself?"

His helplessness is picturesquely represented in this stanza. The attitudes evoked by this picture of emotion are:

(1) a desire to live a pure and dedicated life, free from lasciviousness and consequent suffering, and

(2) a conviction that only the Lord's grace can rescue one from the danger of one's lust.

Lust is the greatest enemy of the aspirant for self-realization. "Whenever I set out to meditate upon Thee," the saint cries to the Lord, "lust comes in my way and enchants me. All my strivings to get rid of its severity go in vain." Once one is released from the shackles of lust, the path is easy for one to attain self-realization and soar high in spirituality. But how to overcome lust is the greatest question. It is this that makes one like a poor animal pursued closely by a hunter.

In another poem he implores the Lord, "All-merciful Lord, have you spared your mercy only in my case? Am I a sinner then? Is it right to abandon me to plunge in the worldly?"

He continues, "Do not think to push me off for the reason that I am the sinner of sinners. I have no other refuge than your Holy Feet. I am already in anguish; do not intensify my anguish by making me seek help from the avaricious and the deceitful."

These stanzas depict his poverty. This is another impediment in the way of the aspirant for higher knowledge. It is aptly and crisply described by saint Manickavasagar as 'the age-old poison of poverty.' Detesting to ask for help from the people, most of whom are avaricious and cheats, he appeals to the Lord to relieve him from poverty. His appeals go unheeded. Hence these poems. The line of the first stanza cited above viz., "Am I a sinner then?" is one of intense emotion. This suggests his desire to remain sinless. But the Lord's unheedful gesture seems to confirm that he is a sinner. The intensity of emotion seems to be concentrated in the adjunct, '*thano*' meaning, 'Is it really so.' The phrase '*nan pavi thano*' (Am I a sinner then?) is captivating because of this concentration of emotion. Still more arresting is the phrase, '*pavikkullum padu*

pavi' (the sinner of sinners). This is arresting, not by the emotion, but by the diction. But the appeal, 'Do not think to push me off for the reason that I am the sinner of sinners,' is full of emotion. The appeal, 'Do not abandon me' is very pathetic and its pathos is well discernible only when seen against its background, viz., the saint's desire to hold to the Lord fast, while the latter gave no gesture of response, even though this gesture of His was quite in contradiction to His graceful act of first revealing Himself to the saint while he was quite young and of admitting him into His service. Hence the saint implores Him, "Do not leave me off." This reminds one of a similar imploring of saint Manickavasagar whose experience in the spiritual realm seems to be similar to that of the saint. The similarity has its echoes in the poetic rendering of the saint. This point was made clear in the first part of this chapter. Here we shall quote an instance from saint Manickavasagar's *Thiruvachakam* which was not referred to earlier. This instance is of his asking the Lord, "Will you leave me off?" This enquiry forms the subject-matter of one full poem of the saint. This poem, just like the saint's, is the expression of saint Manickavasagar's anxiety to hold fast to the Lord, for He had revealed Himself to him and initiated him into high spirituality.

Satire :

Emotions that the saint felt about himself express themselves, sometimes, through satirical remarks. Through sympathetic identification he feels others' vices and follies as his own and resorts to ridicule himself, thereby making a landmark in Tamil poetry in which satire is a very rare feature from the classical period. The remarkable feature of his satire is that he employs phrases of common parlance for ridiculing society. Aiming at its indifference to religion and its refusal to do service which goes by the name 'Sivapunniyam', he says, "it is really a struggle for me to do service to the devotees of the Lord."

Society, ignoring selfless service, resorts to taking sumptuous meals and attaches so much importance to food that

it is ready to forego any value for the sake of getting it. He remarks on this in the following lines:

> "Should it be said that rice mixed with milk is available somewhere, I will rush there to get my pot-like stomach filled with that food. Should I get fruits I shall not share them with others. I do not have a tail. If I had one, the jungle would be the proper place of my residence."

How poignant is this ridicule! By his sympathy he does not want to inflict this ridicule directly upon the society. So he makes himself the victim. He continues, "I ate the food as if my whole body was the stomach."

In another place he lampoons his desire for food thus: "If food is available with very low people, I shall consider their place verily as heaven."

In yet another place he says, "Should my name be pronounced, all the penance would run away."

In these instances the indifference to higher values is sharply aimed at.

He ridicules the niggardly by saying that in their house even the water used for cleansing the rice would be estimated as nectar.

In the allegorical poem entitled, 'Kutumba Koram' he says that the head of the family, by putting on a show, drove many persons who came to him for help. He is really a niggardly man. But without revealing himself he turns out those who approach him by assuming the appearance of a great man. The saint ridicules him that he puts on vain show in order to escape from a social obligation. The phrase that he uses to indicate the vain show is 'paghal vedam' which itself is a satirical usage in common parlance. He gives some of the details of this vain show. He says

that this man cleans his teeth like the one who cleans a stone. This means that he takes so long a time for the purpose as to create an opinion in the observers that he observes strictly the rules of the 'sastras.' In order to pass for a pious devotee he puts on the sacred ashes all over his body. The saint ridicules this act by remarking that he did this like the one who white-washes a wall.

These are some instances of his ridiculing tendency expressed in poetry.

Prose works :

Not only in writing poetry, but also in writing prose does the saint stand distinct. The reader can find in his writings exquisite examples for emotive, descriptive, argumentative and appellant prose. Even though every one of these kinds of prose has specialities about it, the common feature of the style is extreme simplicity. In all of them can be found used the words and phrases and proverbs of common parlance. By writing such kind of prose the saint can be said to have made a significant contribution to Tamil literature, which is somewhat inaccessible to the common man by the dearth of a simple, expositive, precise and argumentative prose. Since prose offers vast scope for exposition in an unfigurative and plain, matter-of-fact style it reaches the man in the street by virtue of its simplicity and precision.

It can be said that the dearth of such a prose was by far removed by the saint's prose writings. Another remarkable contemporary contributor in this field is Arumuga Navalar. His prose works are larger in number and their style is different from that of the saint.

Before studying the significant features of the saint's prose let us have an idea under what circumstances and for what purpose he wrote the various essays. Awareness of these facts may go a long way in their proper appreciation and evaluation.

While relating the saint's life, it was pointed out that at the instance of Kanchipuram Sabapathi Mudaliar, he wrote the prose work entitled, 'Essay on establishing the justice of Manu.' Mudaliar's request was only an incentive for what was surging in the poet's mind to be expressed in proper form. That is, the instigation came not only from outside, but there was also an inner urge in the saint to express himself. It was also pointed out earlier that he wrote this essay in his youth. Even in that early age he felt the sufferings of his fellow-beings, especially the domestic animals, and melted with compassion. Compassion, being the poetry of his life and the chief message he delivers through his poetry, was really the urge that made him write this essay. The other essays and the appeals to the Lord too stress the need of compassion both in the worldly and spiritual levels.

"Equal justice to all beings, especially in their distress" is the theme of this essay. That, even though man is superior to the other beings, equal justice should be administered in the case of other beings killed by him is the main argument of the essay.

The base-material of this essay came to him from *Periyapuranam*, but it is in poetic form. He takes it, clothes it in a multi-coloured form and makes it deliver the argument and message cited above.

Emotive prose :

The death of a calf causes the emotion in the story. The prince and the king who are endowed with a high sense of compassion feel deeply for this young calf's death. The cow, too, is depicted in the essay as pining in extreme anguish on the death of its calf. In relating their suffering the saint gives expression to the deep emotion connected with the situation, by means of a prose which is in consonance with it. The rhythm of the style employed by itself suggests the intensity of feeling. The cow's pining also is given in emotive prose. On hearing the report, the king

feels an overwhelming pity. With poetic prose the saint depicts his grievance. The king thinks that some evil act of his, in his previous birth, must have caused this. He gives the evil acts in succession. This style abounds in alliteration and rhyme. The king's heightened emotion finds expression in the following lines, which by means of moving contrast serve as apt means of communication:

"Shall I call my sceptre which allowed a little calf to be killed in the open street a measuring rod? .... or shall I call it the rod used in the cremation ground to turn the dead body while it burns?"

The injustice done by his son to the calf is symbolically and emotively expressed in these lines.

Prose-style of the appeals to God :

Next, we shall take up his appeals to the Lord. The diction and style of these appeals are totally different from those of the other essays. Being prayers to the Lord, these appeals seem to be specially designed, with a distinct style and diction, more appropriate to the calm and serene atmosphere of a prayer-place and to the confessing and pleading mood of the devotees. A special rhythm which creates musical effect is an outstanding feature of the style of these appeals. A specially chosen diction, characteristic of 'the Grand style', is another remarkable feature. Above all these, the contents by their nature and outlook, heighten the value of these appeals and enhance them to be appropriate for an universal worship. By virtue of these characteristic features these appeals form an important part of the universal religion preached by the saint.

In some places the style of the appeals becomes so mellifluous and rhythmic that one can feel in it a high standard of poesy. The four appeals are fittingly designed and worded to indicate the immeasurable greatness of the Lord

and the meekness of the soul and to enable the latter to confess and appeal to the Lord for the spiritual betterment of all souls. These appeals may be considered as unique in Tamil prose literature, for the like of them was not produced both in the previous and succeeding periods.

7. THE RIGHT FOR INTEGRATION THROUGH SOUL LOVE

Introductory :

"Households, cities, countries and nations have enjoyed great happiness, when a single individual has taken heed of the Good and Beautiful .... Such men not only liberate themselves; they fill those they meet with a free mind."

"In the time of the philosophers, as at every other period, there existed some of these fervent mystics. God does not deprive this world of them, for they are its sustainers."

These two quotations are given by Aldous Huxley in his *Perennial Philosophy* from the writings of Philo and Al. Ghazzali. These appear to be clinching quotations with reference to the religion and philosophy of the saint.

The saint was one of the very few of his generation who not only achieved the final end of human existence through direct experience but also filled the atmosphere and surroundings with expressions of his experience through poetry and prose and issued a clarion call to his contemporaries and to posterity to follow his chosen path which would lead to the redemption of the soul. We learn that his experience in the higher realms—the experience that gave him the sublime knowledge of the divine and his compassion towards all grew simultaneously, each helping the other. His own experience proved to him beyond any

doubt that human compassion is the only ladder to scale spiritual heights. He prayed to the Lord for miraculous powers, not for self-aggrandisement but for compassion towards all souls. Throughout his life he was doing compassionate service to all souls and when such service was not possible with the normal, limited human abilities he prayed unceasingly to the Lord to equip him with more than normal powers. He soared to unimaginable heights in the spiritual realm of knowledge of the ultimate Reality, that is, the reality of realities. This feat of his is based on compassionate service for all souls. The wider the field of service, the greater is the power required. Hence he appealed to the Lord to equip him with necessary power as he rose higher and higher in the realm of experience.

Being on the sure ground of compassion, he realized his 'self' as nothing but light in all its manifestations. He realized his 'self' as similar to God in substance, and hence as only related to God but not to the logos. More established in compassion he realised the Reality as the inner Light of 'his self.' He rose still higher, traversing many intermediate stages of experience, to God-realization, experiencing it as the Light within the inner Light. That state cannot be defined by word or idea; as the scripture says, it is the one 'before whom words recoil.' And yet, the saint gives clear expression to these three aspects of Light—the light within Light=within Light. The first Light is perceived by the eye, and styled by the saint as 'White Light'. The second is felt by the brain and styled the 'Living Light.' The third is felt by the heart and styled the 'Inner Light.' The first is within the second, and the second within the third: for, the heart enables the brain to receive impressions by nourishing it with blood. The eyes are empowered by the brain in their function.

For the attainment of the above three aspects of Light he adopted prayer in the full sense of the term. This particular advancement through prayer has five senses, namely,

(1) worship or self-surrender to the Lord,

(2) interceding for the benefit of other souls, viz., prayer for others,

(3) adoring in pure love for the Lord,

(4) contemplation or meditation to realise the inexhaustible energy in order to rise up to higher realms, and

(5) union with the Lord.

Thus fulfilling all the five senses of the 'Prayer' he attained the unitive knowledge of the Reality. He felt an inner urge, 'the Lord's ordaining,' he would say, to reduce his ineffable experience in the spiritual realm to the usual terminologies of religion and philosophy and thereby to instruct all humanity in the Religion of Compassion, the universal path of Grace, the path surpassing and having as its preliminaries all the existing religions and codes of conduct.

Thus his teachings through poetry, prose, letters, discourses and commentaries point to the existence of a universal, spiritual religion which is too comprehensive to be styled as an institutional religion. He never established a religious institution of his own. In fact, he persuaded people not to limit themselves to the set traditions of any one institution. As regards compassion he appealed to them to break through casteism, racialism, and all 'isms' of worldly nature in order to broaden the sphere of their compassion. As regards higher spiritual knowledge which would enhance compassion so as to develop into 'integration of all souls,' he exhorted them to come out of existing religious beliefs, traditions, idolatry, sacraments, and rituals and the existing philosophical speculations and their set epistemological systems. But he advised them not to deride religious institutions and rituals because they would

enable them to rise above the ordinary limitations of life. Only the evolved souls could set aside such limitations gradually. The people, he urged, must look through and beyond the religions and philosophies for a knowledge of the Reality and must get at it through personal, direct experience of the Lord, not wasting their precious lives in religious and philosophical debates busying themselves with arguments and counter-arguments in favour of one religion or the other. "The ultimate Truth is one" he declares, "for all who follow different religions and hold that theirs is the Supreme."

The religion and philosophy of one group of people are bound to differ from those of another, because the environment differs. So the saint envisaged co-existence among religions and an ultimate re-adjustment in the outlook of humanity in the religious field such that no one would consider any one institutional religion or set philosophy perfect and all-in-all but give importance to spiritual religion which promotes compassion, universal brotherhood, and merger with the Infinite. Co-existence of religions he advocates in order to ensure co-operation and peaceful harmony among all religious groups so as to enable them to perceive the universal God-head. Religious bickerings place in danger the ideal of universal compassion.

The universal outlook as preached by him, when it is spread over the whole world, would find the humanity in perfect peace and amity. The attitude for compassionate service will replace the tendency to combat those who try to promote antagonistic ideas. 'Dying to self' will replace the desire for 'self-aggrandisement' in the name of religion. Universal brotherhood will be gradually understood and it will once for all set the human mind free from the obsession of war, created by racial, religious and political reasons and by differences in economic and social ideologies. The sweeping influence of each of these human organizations on every society of the world will diminish as the ideal of universal brotherhood embedded in the Religion of Compassion spreads.

"Only the universal path to Reality," the saint declares, "would enable men to attain embodied immortality whereas treading the path in any one religion would not do anything in this regard".

Here it may be objected by sectarians that saints in every religion have got their respective chance of salvation within their religions. But it is not the whole truth. In every religion there are two aspects, the sectarian and the universal. One may be styled the ritual and the other the spiritual aspect. The latter is said to be beyond the ritual aspect. But it is not the whole truth. In every religion there may be two kinds of people. Some of them may be made to pass through the ritual aspect before they reach the spiritual side. Others may not require this ordeal as they may be ripe for the higher aspect. The saint's life illustrates the higher aspect. As he is in the know of higher experience the entanglements created by others are clear to him to be expressed as a warning. Jesus Christ also has clearly stated that He has come to fulfil the law and not to transgress it at all. Saivism declares the higher aspect to be the 'Daya-Mula-Darmam,' compassion as the basis for universal service.

It is this higher aspect of every religion that the saint gives prominence to. He holds compassion as the basis of higher spiritual experiences. In this chapter, we deal with this unique path under five heads:

(1) compassion for souls;

(2) promotion of universal brotherhood;

(3) universality of all religions and philosophies;

(4) the transcendental path of life; and

(5) embodied immortality.

(1) *Compassion for souls* :

One who loves best serves best. "Whosoever studies to reach contemplation (i.e., unitive knowledge) should begin by searchingly enquiring of himself how much he loves. For love is the motive power of the mind (*machina mentis*) which draws it out of the world and raises it on high," says St. Gregory the Great. True love for God, not bookish knowledge, nor process of thought would bring one to the experience of the Reality. Saints of Saivite religion declare that love is wisdom. Our saint emphatically declares that love for God will develop in the human mind only when man develops compassion towards his fellow-beings and prepares the ground for Divine Grace. Without Divine Grace abiding love for God is not possible. It is the famous saying of saint Manickavasagar that one surrenders oneself to the Holy Feet of the Lord only through His Grace.

Compassion, according to the Oxford Dictionary, means pity inclining one to spare or help. The saint uses the term, 'Jeevakarunyam' to denote compassion. 'Jeevakarunyam,' according to him, is human sympathy, the outcome of the real nature of the soul. It is human sympathy that leads to Divine Grace. He explains human sympathy as the human soul melting for others; and the Divine Grace as God's disposition to regenerate souls.

(i) *The saint's fundamental trait* :

Compassion is the fundamental trait of the saint's character. He identified himself through and through with compassion and all along he suffered for the troubled souls in whatever form of creation they might be. This characteristic feature is apparent in his poetic appeals to the Lord. In one of them we can hear him say,

> "I languished each time I beheld a crop withering away without proper nourishment. I felt deep sorrow for the destitutes whose hunger was not appeased even after begging in each and every house. My heart gave way at the sight of those suffering from incurable dis-

eases. I indeed felt myself reduced when I beheld the poor, who out of a sense of personal honour preferred untold suffering to begging."[1]

He could not bear even for a while the sight of suffering. A look of concern in the face of his fellowmen was enough to kindle sympathy and fear in him. His heart nearly broke hearing both the old and the young who suffered from utter poverty. They took him into their confidence and told him all their needs. He lamented over and shivered at the death of his neighbours. He smarted at the sight of the strong beating the meek. One of his poems is in the form of an advice to his friend imploring him not to beat children. He shivered when the cruel killed their fellow-beings; the very sight of nets and hooks made him tremble. He feared whenever he met people who were unjust, cruel, drunk with power and fraudulent. He felt strongly for the fact that the major part of the things that the people said and did were in no way connected with any code of justice or with the sense of sympathy. Whenever he heard the voices of others he would grieve that something untoward might have happened to them or to their relatives. He would leave his place in order to help them. In brief he felt that if it so happened that he was made to part with compassion he would at once be bereft of his life. He lived through and through the philosophy of compassion he taught.

It is evident from his earlier prose-work entitled, *Manu-murai-kanda-vachakam* and one of his great appeals to the Lord that from his boyhood the saint was endowed with this high sense of compassion and that it was his inner urge to propagate it among the people. And when his teacher, Kanchipuram Sabapathi Mudaliar requested him to write a prose-book for the use of the children he thought it fit to instil the sense of compassion even in the minds of the children and hence wrote the book entitled, *Manu-murai-kanda-vachakam*. In the course of giving the characteristic

1. *Thiruvarutpa*: Pillaipperu Vinnappam, 62nd stanza.

traits of the hero of the story, he specifies that he would do good for all beings without any discrimination whatever. In another place of the same book the hero weeps for the demise of a calf which was crushed accidentally to death by his son while he passed a street in his chariot. Coming to know of this, he became very grave with such thoughts as would create mental obsession. He thought that he must have done unknowingly such unjust acts as levying enormous taxes on the people, causing heart-burnings of the poor, extracting work without giving proper wages, and so on. This shows clearly that the saint uses his pen for propagating indirectly the humanitarian outlook. He teaches the people the indispensability of compassion for life in this world and for the eternal life to be lived in 'inseparable union with the ultimate Reality'.

(ii) *Aspects of Compassionate service*:

He explains compassion as manifested in human acts in three aspects. Of them, one is the positive aspect and the others are negative. They are:

(1) doing positive good to fellow-beings when they suffer from hunger, disease, thirst, ignorance, poverty and fear;

(2) refraining from killing;

(3) refraining from taking flesh.

Of the six deeds of the positive side he puts more stress on relieving the hungry from hunger. This along with the 'nonkilling' on the negative side forms, "*para-jeeva-karunyam*" the divine compassion, as distinct from Divine Grace. All the rest are '*apara-jeevakarunyam*' or non-divine compassion. These aspects of compassion make up the summum bonum of worship. This forms the first part of the essay, 'Jeevakarunyam' by the saint.

Let us now study the positive and negative sides of compassion in detail.

(iii) *Relieving one from hunger*:

Great men like Thiruvalluvar have already spoken about the virtue of relieving one from hunger. Thiruvalluvar looks upon the virtue as even higher than performing penance. He insists upon giving away in charity to the poor and the destitute. He points out that the two ideals of human life are to give away in charity to the needy and to earn reputation thereby which will eternalize one's name. Even though such a one's mortal coil is shed, his memory is retained for ever. That is deathlessness in a way. "When giving away the needed to the needy is rendered impossible," says Thiruvalluvar, "one may prefer death to life. Death is suffering indeed; but is preferable to being left incapable of relieving others from suffering by giving away what is needed for the relief." His statement shows that he valued the relief rendered to the suffering more than the life lived without giving away in charity. He goes to the extent of saying that even if somebody comes forward and says that 'giving away in charity' does not help in any way to attain heavenly bliss, it is good to continue the charity. He says that the very sight of the needy asking for help is painful, and that pain-inflicting hunger will not at all hurt the one who makes it a point to share his food with others.

In the period of religious renaissance the people fed the devotees of God in large numbers. Devotees of Saiva faith like Siruthondar and Ilaiyankudimaranar held it was their life's mission to feed at least one devotee a day at whatever time they came to them and they wished to give them whatever kind of food they asked for. Here we see only the limited sphere of service.

Thirumular first spoke of all beings as living temples and insisted on giving them their need. He implores the people to give food to all those who are in need of it without any discrimination. He urges them to make it a point, every time they begin to eat, to give a handful of food to the needy.

The saint, in whom we have an integral personality, holds the act of relief from hunger not only as a virtue, as a pious act and as a ritual but as the only way to know, love, and realize God. That is, it is the only way to obtain God's Grace. He allows no discrimination between devotees and others, believers and non-believers, males and females, and friends and foes. He urges that the hungry be fed without any reference to the caste, religion, walk of life, family, creed or nation they may belong to. Going still further, he says that it is indispensable to feed domestic animals and the plants cultivated for various uses.

(iv) *Rendering other kinds of help*:

Not only in regard to relieving from hunger, but also in regard to other kinds of help he accepts no discrimination. He says that he is ready to carry out the orders of the people who do good to any creature treating them all as equals. He further says that understanding the right of every soul to love others and rejoicing over that understanding those good people deem the other souls as themselves; it is their heart where the Lord dances in the form of Pure Wisdom. He continues that their disposition to all the souls of the world is the grand justice which belongs to the pure path of pursuit that leads to the ultimate Reality.

He insists on one's giving help to all souls with one's money and with one's own physical labour. When these are not possible one should at least pray for them. He insists on family men of low income being prudent enough in spending for feeding their family as well as those others who may happen to come asking for food. He says that feeding either of these at the cost of the other is against the Will of God's grace. Hence he advocates prudence and thrift. He dissuades the rich from spending unscrupulously on pomp during their family ceremonies like marriages and persuades them to feed the needy instead. He suggests that all men can do this according to their capacity. He deplores that rich people when they move pomp-

ously in high spirits among grand dinners and ostentatious music and dance parties, normally do not relish the sight of a poor, hunger-stricken, meek, human creature waiting anxiously nearby for food.

(v) *Salvation only through service*:

He equally deplores and condemns the act of the pious people in ignoring the poor and destitute and says that even if they practise yoga, penance, telling of beads, and meditation they will be far away from God's grace. He continues:

> "Even those who perform all kinds of religious acts, and those who practise concentration for attunement, controlling their mind and senses and refraining from taking food and sleep, and those who have attained innumerable superhuman powers and those who have attained the knowledge of 'Brahman' through complete renunciation of desire and support, if they are without compassion at their respective levels will not surely be allowed entrance into the portals of Bliss of the Ultimate Reality. All acts done without compassion are mere tricks."[2]

Elsewhere he says that at the time of 'Pralaya' or destruction for rest there will be some good souls in the state of union with the Lord Who would be dancing along with his 'sakti'. If it is asked who they are, the answer is that they are those who did positive good to souls. Thus he ably brings out the importance and indispensability of compassionate service like relief from hunger and disease both in the promotion of the welfare of society and in the fulfilment of higher ideals in the spiritual field.

(vi) *Exemplar of selfless service*:

He himself set an example for selfless service. Service, indeed, was his motto. He realized God, in every higher level, only through compassionate service, and the consequent experience of Grace-Light. He himself expresses

2. *Jeevakarunya Ozhukkam.*

this, metaphorically, by saying that the Lord put him in the cradle of great compassion and fed him with the divine 'manna', of His Grace. A concrete illustration is the 'Sanctuary for Eternal Service' established by him at Vadalur for feeding the poor and destitutes and ascetics. Perfectly true to the name of the establishment, feeding has been performed there for a whole century continuously from its inception. The necessary food-stuffs are perennially donated by the continuous stream of devotees who visit the Sanctuary.

And another soul-stirring illustration for his unfading influence in the field of service, especially in relieving hunger, is the sight at Vadalur on the chief festive occasion of the display of Great Light in the 'Hall of Wisdom for universal worship' (Satya Gnana Sabha). The whole area is replete with boarding centres for lakhs and lakhs of people who assemble there for the worship of the Light for three consecutive days. The people who feed see the light of satisfaction on the faces of the fed and among that light the 'smiling grace' of the Lord. At that moment a considerable experience of God is within their reach. With the help of that experience they can attain the experience of Supreme Grace-Light of the God-head, of which the display of light in the Hall of Wisdom is a symbolical representation. This shows clearly that he not only engaged himself in actions of compassion for better results in contemplation, but also made his contemporaries and posterity learn the importance of compassionate service in the promotion of spirituality.

(vii) *Worship through service* :

He describes compassionate service in his own way as an act of worship performed by one through the softening of one's soul caused by the suffering of other souls in hunger, disease, thirst, poverty, fear, etc. By holding such action to be prayer, he does not mean that action or work (Karmayoga) will itself give one the perception of Reality. In fact, he realized by his experience that the ultimate goal

cannot be reached solely by contemplation—i.e., the way to Reality in and through the soul—to the exclusion of the way of action i.e., the way to Reality in and through the world. The reverse might also be true. Hence he showed the people the golden mean of these two ways.

But there were advocates of contemplation exclusively like the Buddhists of the Hinayana School. (Spiritual knowledge exclusively in the heights of the soul was rejected by Mahayana Buddhism as inadequate. A similar rejection of quietism within the Christian tradition is there too.) In the popular philosophy of our own time it goes without saying that the end of human life is action; and that contemplation (above all in its lower forms of discursive thought) is the means to that end. "The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth," writes Sri Aurobindo, "even when he seeks a supraphysical knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. 'Earth is His footing,' says the Upanishad, whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe." Quoting this, Aldous Huxley explains:

> "To discover the Kingdom of God exclusively within oneself is easier than to discover it, not only there, but also in the outer world of minds and things and living creatures. It is easier because the heights within reveal themselves to those who are ready to exclude from their purview all that lives without. And though this exclusion may be a painful and mortificatory process, the fact remains that it is less arduous than the process of inclusion, by which we come to know the fullness as well as the heights of spiritual life. Where there is exclusive concentration on the heights within, temptations and distractions are avoided.... But when the hope is to know God inclusively, to realize the divine Ground in the world as well as in the soul, temptations and distractions must not be avoided, but sub-

mitted to and used as opportunities for advance; there must be no suppression of outward-turning activities, but a transformation of them so that they become sacramental."[3]

The saint seems to have chosen the inclusive way of perception stating that compassionate service to souls and the perception of the Lord through contemplation grow together each helping the other. This is the inclusive way. He describes the experience he had in this inclusive path as the experience of Grace-Light. We hear him say that as a result of repeated experience of Grace-Light he was delivered from the eternal adjunct of ego. This is the result of his realizing the ultimate ground of all existence both in and through his soul and in and through the world. He expresses this new experience of his in the first three stanzas of a poem sung by him after he passed through it. In the first stanza he says generally that he had the true experience of God dwelling in and through the world. In the second stanza he says that he experienced God as dwelling in his personality and soul and as making him united with Him. In the third stanza he explicitly puts forth his experience of the ultimate as being in and through the world, i.e., all bodies, all inhabitant souls, all minds, all feelings and all other things, which he perceived as light, and as a result he was delivered of the ego (darkness) and came to a state of feeling no discrimination in the element of time, namely, day and night. He felt the Reality in all the five elements. While all the fields of art declare that the Reality is not to be seen, it was given to him to experience it with his eyes. He could also touch it. Hence he elsewhere indicates this experience as 'external union' and says that he embraced the Lord bodily. Both of these are mystical expressions of what he experienced.

(viii) *Contemporary society* :

He is reported to have taught the people: "Contemplation is not a good practice; but natural practice of life and service is necessary."

3. *Perennial Philosophy*, page 74.

He placed stress on service, especially that of relief from hunger, as the only way to salvation while his contemporary and considerably anterior societies had sometimes ignored its importance, sometimes made discrimination in those who were in need of humane service, sometimes practised it as only a ritual and in course of time had ignored it thoroughly in their greedy pursuits of wealth, in their desire for hoarding money, in their mad run after science and industry and in their busy, 'civilized' life in cities. The saint has very aptly pictured this condition of contemporary society, as he observed it in the city of Madras. He says he avoided the urban atmosphere for this reason and shivered at the sight of the poor who, despite their asking in every house, did not get anything to appease their hunger. His contemporary society valued money, power and pomp more than love, compassion and service and limited religion into mere ritual, a show of following which, it hoped, would display it as 'righteous.' Hence he preached a spiritual religion giving sole preference to compassionate service and condemning rituals of all sorts.

(ix) *Non-violence and vegetarianism* :

Now, of the negative aspects of compassionate service preached and practised by the saint. They are non-killing and not taking flesh. He condemns chiefly the sacrifice of life performed in the name of gods of various types and names. This sort of killing under the 'garb' of religion is an age-old practice. The Buddha is known to have rescued a sheep from being sacrificed in the fire. Thiruvalluvar prefers non-killing to sacrifices. Saivism and other refined religions prohibited 'sacrifice of life.' But cruder branches of Saivism like those of 'Pashupathas,' 'Kapalikas' and 'Sakteyas' continued that practice in a very uncivilized manner. Every village deity was 'appeased' by the sacrifice of poor cattle and poultry. This was wide-spread all over the country. People would eat what they 'sacrificed' ! Besides sacrifice, the practice of killing cattle and poultry for purposes of food is even now much prevalent in society. Hinduism, as it is commonly understood, never prohibited killing and

non-vegetarianism. Refined Saivism advocated non-killing and vegetarianism. Buddhism precludes killing but accepts non-vegetarianism. Christianity preaches love, compassion and charity but does not prohibit non-vegetarian food. The same is the case with Islam. In modern society this evil practice has grown by leaps and bounds. People are advised to take flesh for health reasons. It is also wrongly associated with strength and valour.

The saint took cudgels against this practice and that of killing. He wished from his boyhood to wean the people of the world from flesh-eating and killing. And when he acquired the determination and necessary inspiration through direct experience he formulated the unique path which he called 'Sanmargam.' He was afraid of the people who, without following the principles of this unique path, resorted to indiscriminate killing in order to gratify their appetite. Instead of compassionately treating their fellow-beings, they lived at the cost of their lives. By way of explaining 'Sanmargam' the saint called it the path of non-killing which name, he says, was suggested by the Lord himself. This removes the mental obsession of a 'religious necessity' of killing in the dignified name of sacrifice. He further says :

> "If a religious teacher who passes for a man of wisdom advocates sacrifice with the covetous desire of eating flesh, he will prove to be a misnomer even if he is able to convert a male into a female and to raise the dead."[4]

The reason is obvious. Aldous Huxley writes in this regard, quoting a Latin saying which means, "Turning to God without turning from self".

> "Those who turn to God without turning from themselves are tempted to evil in several characteristic and easily recognisable ways. They are tempted to practise magical rites, by means of which they hope to compel

4. *Thiruvarutpa,* 2nd Book, 45th Poem.

God to answer their petitions and, in general, to serve their private or collective ends. All the ugly business of sacrifice, incantation and what Jesus called 'vain repetition' is a product of this wish to treat God as a means to indefinite self-aggrandizement, rather than as an end to be reached through total self-denial."[5]

The saint valued the virtue of refraining from killing more than the wonder-working of raising the dead. He abhorred the sight of killing done under the garb of religion. His contentions against the right for killing one another are discussed in this chapter under the sub-heading of universal love and brotherhood. It will suffice to say here that he was against even hunting the wild beasts.

Now of flesh eating. He is somewhat harsh when he refers to flesh eaters. He addresses them as 'corpses'. Such is his contempt for that habit. Flesh eating involves killing. That is why Thiruvalluvar said that if nobody desired to eat flesh nobody would come forward to make a business out of it, getting the animals killed and bringing the flesh to the market. Thereby he has refuted the argument that flesh eating is not sin because those who eat it do not kill. The saint not only precludes (from the society aspiring for spiritual knowledge) the flesh eaters and those who commit killing, but also describes fleshy food as an inducement for the rise and development of the lower tendencies. He gives reason for his description. He says that the mind of the flesh eaters cannot at all sense the inner self. We can infer from this that such will be the tendencies developed in the psyche of the total personality of an individual by the bodily tendencies which are nourished by flesh. He further says that when the inner self is not realized, knowledge of God is not possible and that therefore flesh is a food of lower tendencies.

Then he takes up the argument that since plants and crops also have life, vegetarianism also involves hurting and

5. *Perennial Philosophy*, page 279.

vegetarian food also is of lower tendencies. He agrees that plants and crops have life and says that vegetarian food will be of lower tendencies if they are really hurt. He refutes the argument with four reasons:

1. The life in the plants is not full as they are monosense beings.

2. Their seeds are mere inertia and they get saturated with life only when we sow them in the earth and give nourishment.

3. When we take the fruits (both ripe and unripe), flowers and leaves from plants we do not make them part with their life.

4. The plants have no intellectual faculties fully developed.

From the study of compassion so far pursued we arrive at a practical conclusion. With copious reasons the saint enables the people to adopt a practical religion based on a clear and practical philosophy.

In continuation of the descriptive definition of compassion, let us turn to the promotion of universal love and brotherhood.

2. *Promotion of Universal Brotherhood* :

(i) *Right to live* :

The saint who allows no discrimination whatever among men holds firmly that those who commit the evils of killing and flesh eating have no right to claim kinship with those who refrain from them. They are, according to him, a separate class. They do not deserve any help or friendship or guidance in the spiritual field except to be relieved from hunger. "If they suffer by accident," says the saint, "others should not keep quiet, but run to their help and relieve them from their suffering and fear of any sort." This shows

that even though the saint considers them as cruel people he is not for refusing their right to live, and in case of accidents in which they sustain serious wounds, their right to be given necessary relief. His contention is that all people, whether good or evil, kind or cruel, male or female, whether belonging to this caste or that caste, to one nation or to another, do have this right to live and to let live.

Some measure of penetrating love that springs up despite the differences pertaining to the above organisations is necessary to establish this right. We and every nation of the world have witnessed various instances illustrating this penetrating love manifested in the case of sexual love, and of private friendship between two individuals. Do these not prove that if proper steps are taken, this penetrating love can as well exist between societies and nations, for they are only organised collections of individuals? Do these not prove that penetrating love transcends all differences of caste, creed, nation, etc., just because it springs from the deep source of the human personality, namely the soul, and not from any other source pertaining to the physical universe which is of limited conditions?

Physically and mentally induced feelings, emotions and tastes have a limited sphere, whereas the love that springs up from the depths of the soul has no limitations whatever, for there is no limitation at all for the soul's reach. Some philosophical schools have tried to prove the soul's independent movements by giving fitting interpretations to dream-life.

(ii) *Existence of soul* :

But there are writers who have denied the existence of any permanent soul. Aldous Huxley points out the doctrines of some of those and writes his own impression on them as follows :

"Mankind," says Hume, "are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other

with an inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux and movement." An almost identical doctrine is of the Buddhists which is called 'anatta.' This is the denial of any permanent soul existing behind the flux of experience and the various psycho-physical 'skandhas' (closely corresponding to Hume's 'bundles', which constitute the more enduring elements of personality. Hume and the Buddhists give a sufficiently realistic description of selfness in action; but they fail to explain how or why the bundles ever became bundles. Did their constituent atoms of experience come together of their own accord? And, if so, why, or by what means, and within what kind of a non-spatial universe? To give a plausible answer to these questions in terms of 'anatta' is so difficult that we are forced to abandon the doctrine in favour of the notion that, behind the flux and within the bundles, there exists some kind of permanent soul, by which experience is organized and which in turn makes use of that organized experience to become a particular and unique personality. This is the view of orthodox Hinduism, from which Buddhist thought parted company, and of almost all European thought from before the time of Aristotle to the present day."[6]

The saint also, in his essay on 'Compassionate service', holds a discussion on the experience of hunger, thirst, fear, etc., and what element exactly in the human personality experiences them. He first poses the question what is the use of compassion while the soul is said to be not at all affected by hunger, thirst, fear, etc., because they are said to be the experiences of the senses and the mind. He answers that question thus :

"Except the soul all the other aspects of the physical body and of the subtle body are mere inertia. They are not intellectuals left to themselves. So they cannot experience pleasure and pain. Just as in the case of a spectacle-wearer, it is not the spectacles that shed tears at the sight of a suffering individual even though his eyes see only through them, so also the senses and the mind help the soul in per-

6. *Perennial Philosophy*, pages 47-48.

ceiving things but do not experience them; it is the soul that experiences them. Just as the brightness and feebleness of the eyes can be seen through the spectacles, so also the enlightenment or merriness or tiresomeness of the soul are reflected in the mind and even manifest in the body also. Hence laughter and tears."

(iii) *Soul-love* :

If there is no limitation at all for the soul's reach, the sphere of its love cannot be limited either. Since this is true with the living beings of the universe, they as souls are nearer to each other. Even though their physical conditions are limited and controlled by space and time, they may love each other not heeding the differences pertaining to their physical and mental conditions. The saint calls the love between people and that between people and other beings, as soul-love. If this universal love emanates in people, no difference that the world has hitherto known can impede its development.

But what is it that makes the souls love each other? Does every soul love every other? Innumerable instances are daily happening to illustrate the lack of sympathy, kindness, attitude for give and take and love. The world is distorted by unceasing strifes, battles, and intermittent wars. Why so?

(iv) *Soul perception* :

The saint, posing a similar question, answers that people have not realised that all are brothers and that when one individual inflicts suffering upon another by various means, he is really hurting his brother. They can know this if only they are made to perceive even beyond the physical level and to feel their kind in the other individuals. This perception is called 'soul perception.' This is normally, in many cases, veiled by ignorance. All souls are akin to each other as brothers because their manifestation as living beings was effected by the God-head. This age-old brotherhood is the right of every soul that is manifest as a living

being, rational or irrational, to love and to be loved by other souls. The saint calls this right the equal right of souls to love—*Anmaneya-urimai.* Thereby he accepts, feels, and tries to establish the fraternity and liberty of not only the people of a particular nation but also of the whole world of living beings. Revolutionary writers of France like Rousseau paved the way for the French Revolution and in due course opened the eyes of the whole world, especially the Asian part of the globe, to these born-rights of every individual; they made the politically fettered people fling themselves heart and soul in the striving for independence.

The saint belonged to the age which witnessed political stir and upheavals all over India and revolutions here and there to get freedom from alien domination. Even though he did not associate himself with any active political thinking he brought out in terms of his own point of view the eternal ideal of universal brotherhood and thereby indirectly indicated that to make a nation politically bound is against the natural law innate in worldly life. Nevertheless, in just one stanza of a poem he comes out with a direct attack on the existing Government on the ground that it has no sympathy for the people. He wishes that a Government of sympathetic, good-natured people should replace it. It appears from a line of the stanza that he gives his blessings to the good men who dedicated themselves to the achievement of independence and to all the people in general.

He broadened the sphere of human love to cover also the irrational beings. His conception of universal brotherhood is really a great one and, if it is properly understood and put in practice in every sphere of life and in every relation of sociological, national and international character, not only can better results be achieved in the endeavours undertaken from time to time to promote peace and amity in these levels of human life, but also the lives of innumerable cattle, poultry and fish now killed daily for purposes of food will be saved. What right do the people have to

kill the poor helpless beings which are also manifestations of souls as they themselves are, and which have equal right to live and share the life in this world? The poor creatures should be treated with sympathy. Among the human beings also the weak should be treated with sympathy by the strong. If this sympathy is lacking, as it is now, and if the doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest' is continued to be applied by strong men in their relations with the weak and by humanity in general in its relations with weak animals, there will be no life at all for the weak and the meek. The doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest' may be true in the kingdom of the wild. It is due to the fact that beasts are incapable of sympathy. "The result is," writes the saint, "that there is no community life in the jungles." There are only chaos and confusion. No one expects community life among the beasts. But that doctrine is completely irrelevant in human society. The saint warns: "If the strong men, bereft of human sympathy, try to dominate the weak, there will be no security of life for the latter and in due course the strong also will, of their own pride, differ from one another and each will try to establish his own, as the result of which chaos and confusion will prevail. Life will be at stake and total destruction of human life through incessant wars will take place. The human world will change virtually into a world of beasts."

(v) *The strong and the weak* :

He contends that the strong and well-to-do, instead of living at the cost of the weak, should have a sympathetic disposition towards them, help them in their needs, and relieve them from hunger rather than deprive them of their food as is the case now in many human relations. Selfish motivations mar day by day the amicable relations between individuals and classes of people; for instance the moneyed class and the labour class. Frictions in relations have become a normal affair. Labour movements and labour unions have arisen in order to safeguard the interests of the labour class and an endless competition is going on to find out which class is stronger. It is unnecessary to labour the point. It will suffice to say that the lack of sympathy and sympa-

thetic approach to human problems and the lack of knowledge of the fundamental kinship and equality of all people have resulted in disastrous conditions all over the world. The saint insists that the ideal compassionate outlook is that the fortunate who enjoy freedom, wealth and intellect should not resort to deceptive ways to deprive the weak of their right for food and amenities of life, but should help them in their needs and protect them from sufferings like hunger and mortal wounds. To put it briefly, his doctrine is "the haves safe-guarding the have-nots" or "the fortunate protecting the unfortunate." In his article on 'Compassionate Service' he gives arguments in favour of hunger and mortal wounding being considered as intense dangers. It is his contention that people who come forward to help the victims to these dangers would easily render help to others in their disease, desire, fear, and other kinds of poverty. He makes further discrimination among these two dangers and says that hunger is more cruel. He gives the injunction to relieve all, even the evil and the wicked, from their suffering, if it is due to hunger. In the case of animals and birds and other beings one should at any cost protect and relieve them from fear and mortal wounds. Even in the case of wild beasts, killing must not be resorted to. Even for feeding the domestic animals fleshy food should not be used, because it involves killing. These injunctions imply his contention that every soul has a right to live and nobody has the right to deprive any creature of its life. That this right should be exercised only through love and not through force is his contention. Hence he indicates the right as 'the right for soul-love.'

If proper education and other activities are undertaken to make the people understand that the responsibility to create and preserve the whole universe rests on the one God-head and hence the life of the world is under the fine net-work of His control the saint's doctrine of universal brotherhood will be recognized and understood. He himself understood it through his experience and put it in practice and made it the basis of the path he preached.

(vi) *The right for integration through soul-love* :

The saint's doctrine of universal brotherhood implies not only universal love and the right of every soul to love and to be loved but also the equality of all individuals whatever their social status, caste, religion, nation and other affinities may be. According to it no discrimination should be shown between people of one status and those of another. No discrimination should be shown between rational and irrational beings. Further, one should deem the other soul virtually as one's self. This 'oneness' is the resultant of 'soul-love.' This is called by him 'integration.' Soul-love creates in the hearts of those who adopt it a feeling of oneness with each other.

This does not mean that all souls are one. The saint has made it clear elsewhere in so many places that he follows the doctrine of plurality of souls. In one of them he mentions that the souls are of diverse kinds. Probably he bears in mind the division of souls made by the Saiva Siddanta School of Philosophy. According to this school the division is three-fold: (1) Sakalar, (2) Pralayakalar, and (3) Vignanakalar. The saint makes mention of these three kinds in the first poem of the first book.

We have hitherto given the explanation of the special term the saint brought into vogue to denote his doctrine, namely, *Anmaneya-orumaippattu-urimai*—the right of all souls for integration through soul-love. He declares this doctrine before the world fully realizing his kinship to it. He exhorts the people telling them that he is not unrelated to them but is a lovable kith and kin. In one of his conversations with his disciples he states that he prayed to God on behalf of those who were near and far away, for he followed the principle of the right of all souls for integration through love. He declares that the ripe time has come for all the people of the world to live as one integrated society, casting aside all differences of ever so many denominations and fully realizing their fundamental relationship to each other as brothers.

The chief ideal set forth in *Thiruvarutpa* and other works of the saint is the right of all souls for integration through soul-love. The saint declares emphatically that this is the chief ideal of the universal religion he preaches. This right can be established only through penetrating soul-love. This love will emanate in one's heart only when one casts aside all the 'supposed' differences of religions and philosophies and the artificial distinction of caste and creed. The saint implores God in one of his appeals to help him and other people cast off these differences. These are the chief impediments in their path to attain 'union wih God.'

The pivot of soul-love is the growing knowledge of God. One's realization of integration with all other souls will lead one to ultimate integration or union with God. The term *Anmaneya-orumaippattu-urimai* will also mean 'the integration of soul with God through penetrating love.' Let us explain this.

A study of the saint's experience and his treatment of universal brotherhood shows clearly the undermentioned facts :

(1) One's compassion towards others and one's initial knowledge of the 'oneness' of God will develop in one a catholicity of outlook.

(2) The universe in which we live has its origin and end in God.

(3) The knowledge of the 'oneness' of God can be obtained through an unbiased, sympathetic, comparative study of all religions and schools of philosophy.

(4) The catholicity of outlook, obtained by such a study will, in its turn, free one's mind, intellect, and thought process from the limited spheres—'fetters,' so to say—like caste, family, colour, society, and

nation in the physical plane, and religion, philosophical notions, art, method of worship and code of life in the spiritual plane.

(5) All these facts when realized, amount to the emancipation of soul. This emancipation will fill one's mind with a surging interest for realizing by direct experience the essence of one's personality apart from one's body, and psyche and its associations with the universe in the above-mentioned planes. When this interest gets intensified to such a high level that the mind concentrates upon inwardly petitioning to God for light, i.e., enlightenment in its enquiry, the divine initiation takes place in the form of exclusive concentration.

(6) This exclusive concentration on the heights within is rendered possible by the divine initiation (experienced by him as the light and as the touch of the Holy Feet of the Lord on his head). Through this concentration one can feel one's 'self' independent of all physical elements and the elements of the subtle body (including the mind). This feeling is a result of perceiving each element and of controlling the temptations and distractions caused by it. Thus, as a result of the initiation the 'self' of one's personality—its essence—is realized.

(7) This realization, combined with catholicity of outlook, will set one on the road of realization of universal brotherhood, i.e., the right of all souls for integration through soul-love.

(8) As a result of this, compassion in an intensified measure will unify one with all other beings of the universe. Discriminations of all sorts will not at all be felt.

One will begin to look upon all beings as equal and to refrain from all sorts of contempt and enmity. This is the integration of souls. Once this integration of one's soul with others is felt through intense compassion, the exclusive approach, i.e., concentration on the heights within for the knowledge of the divine ground of all existence, is supplemented by the 'inclusive approach,' i.e. concentration on the fullness without, for realizing the divine ground in the world as well as in the soul. Temptations and distractions which arise not on account of one's self but on account of intense compassion for other souls, especially the suffering ones are experienced by one in this level. One resorts to internal prayer—now in the sense of 'intercession'—to the Lord to give light—further experience and guidance— in this regard. At the present level one's mind is replete with compassion realizing full well the universal brotherhood of all creatures. The Lord's Grace again comes on one in this level and gives its guiding light. (The saint calls this by the name, 'Grace Light'). Worshipping the Lord in this inclusive approach is specially styled by the saint as 'worship through the integration of souls', the process of which involves a melting of the heart with a high sense of compassion. In other words, he holds that compassion is worship. "The more the melting of souls for each other, the easier will be the direct manifestation of God's Grace," says the saint. In one of his precepts he says that the natural trait of the soul is compassion. He continues that if a soul realizes its unlimited sphere (through compassionate service to fellow souls) it will surely experience the union with God.

(vii) *The name, 'Arutpa'* (Song of grace):

The saint's statements are well exemplified by his own experience. He attained the experience of the Lord's grace and earnestly wished that his fellow-men all over the world should also get similar experience and hence he propagated through poetic language, the universal path he felt and lived. For these two reasons, we may surmise, his poems are generally styled 'Arutpa' and his universal path is known as 'Arul-neri' (Path of grace). He himself signi-

fies his religion with this nomenclature. He holds that through the experience of the Lord's grace one can attain Love for the Lord. He signifies this Love with the term 'anbu'. We learn from his experience that this is the most superior kind of Love that is ever known. It is this Love of the saint for the God-head that finds expression in mystic language through esoteric poetry. He further holds that this Love would bring one to union with the Lord. This is also exemplified by his experience, namely God-realization.

It is clear from what has been hitherto said that the inclusive approach is the pivot of the saint's religion. We shall proceed now to study what he felt about the differences between the existing religions which, in his own experience, fled away as soon as he realized the integration of souls.

3. *Universality of all religions and philosophies*:

It has already been mentioned that every religion has two aspects, one sectarian and the other universal. The saint has clearly formulated all the universal aspects of religions and philosophies through his experience under the guidance of the divine grace. He outgrew the sectarian aspect of religious life so that he was enabled to have the glimpse into higher realms. Let us trace this development in his life.

(i) *Making of an universalist:*

Even though he began his spiritual life worshipping Lord Muruga and Lord Siva successively in his boyhood and in his youth and asserted his belief in Saivite religion, it can be seen from some of his poems which he composed in that period that he had no belief in levelling arguments in favour of any one religion. On the other hand, he held that all religions led to God. In the said poems he addresses the Lord as one who dwells in the minds of those who do not resort to debate on religions. and as the endless great ocean in which all religions enter and merge. One

of his poems belonging to his early age states that the Lord agrees and is ever one, with those great men who hold that all religions are one. As represented by most of the poems in the I, II, III and V books composed in his early years he had his footing in the Saivite religion but his mind was pointing upwards in the direction of the inevitable oneness of all religions. A beautiful instance which represents both these aspects of his faith is found in the poem entitled *The wreath on Deivamani*. In this poem he entreats Lord Muruga to enable him to follow a grand path without being caught by the devil of a religion.

Instances are many in the above books which convey his resoluteness not to worship any God but Lord Siva. But they can be explained as the expression of his concentrated worship of Lord Siva. In those moments he estimated all other deities no greater than men who get involved in the cycle of birth and death. Even though there are only a few instances in the said books which convey his universal outlook they are so well expressed that one cannot ignore them as mere passing references. One of these stanzas of his 'Mahadevamalai' addresses the Lord as "Sivam who in the form of Bliss performs the Dance of grace in the Hall of Wisdom, having transcended all religions."

So it is not wrong to conclude that even while following the Saivite religion in his early years he was aware of the fact that one could, and had to cross the boundaries of that religion, as those of any other to reach the transcendent Reality. It was Saivite religion that served as a formative element in preparing him as an universalist. He deemed the Saivite saint Gnanasambandhar as his spiritual guide and the chapter on his experience testifies to what extent this saint's revelation guided him in almost all his experiences in the spiritual realm. This Saivite saint was an important formative factor in preparing him as an universalist. He called the universal path, "Samarasa Sanmarga Siva Neri", and preferred to call the Lord as 'Sivam' even while he preached the universal path persu-

ading the people not to be confined to any religion or philosophy. He entreated them to perceive that 'Sivam' is the only truth. He worshipped in his youth the Lord in his divine dancing form. This worship was a significant factor in his religious life. He carried it right through his life till the summit of his religious experience, when he felt one with the Supreme Grace-Light of the Lord both within and without. He expresses that experience by saying that the Lord Nataraja came into communion with him. Even in his youth he was aware that the divine dancing form of the Lord is the representation of the Holy 'mantra' namely, 'the Panchakshara'. In the fourth poem of the second book he identifies the dancing Lord and the Holy Panchakshara as one and the same. This is in accordance with the tenets of Saivism.

Saivism and the saint:

Further, a deep study of his works reveals the fact that he describes the Lord and gives expression to his experiences mostly through the epistemological terms used by the school of the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy. Most of the tenets of this school are accepted by him. To relate a few examples:

(a) We can take first his statement of the plurality of souls. He mentions that the souls are of different types. In this regard he accords with the classification of souls made by the Saiva Siddhanta school, namely Sakalar, (commoners) Pralayakalar (Gnostics) and Vignanakalar (Contemplatives).

(b) Next comes his statement that the Lord gave physical bodies to the souls which lay in utter darkness in absolute unawareness of themselves. He indicates this utter darkness by the term 'Kevalam', which the Saiva Siddhanta uses for the same purpose.

(c) He accords with Saiva Siddhanta in grouping the 'Anavam'—eternal source of ignorance along with two other

sources of bondage which bind the soul, namely 'maya' (the primordial matter) and 'karma' (fruit of action) and in calling them 'mummalam' (Triple bondages). Further he classifies 'maya' as the Saiva Siddhanta School does, into two classes namely 'Suddha-maya' and 'thotramam maya'. He declares that all these three bondages were burnt out as he was given to realize the Lord's grace. This experience also is in complete accord with the Saiva Siddhanta.

(d) He accepts and falls in line with the conviction of the Saiva Siddhanta School of philosophy in holding the irrevocable Truths as three in number, namely (1) pathi, (2) pasu and (3) pasam and in conceiving of 'pathi' as unaffected by 'pasam' otherwise known as 'anavam', the source of ignorance. According to the Saiva Siddhanta the 'pathi' is the 'thadattha' state of the Lord i.e. 'Sivam' whose reality (swarupam) is ineffable. 'Thadattha' state means the conceptual state.

(e) Next comes his insistence on the Lord's grace. The saint has realized the importance and inevitability of grace for the soul's higher experience and in the promotion of compassion. This point is dilated in the next chapter. It will suffice to point out here that he most significantly addresses the Lord as 'Arutperunjyothi' (Supreme Grace-Light) and that he knew the importance of the Lord's grace in the progress of spiritual life even before he had the full experience of it.

(f) Next, we shall take up the three relevant concepts of Saiva Siddhanta relating to the preparation of the soul in the final phase of coming into union with God. They are:

(1) equality of deeds (iruvinai oppu),

(2) the preceding state of the source of ignorance before it leaves the soul once for all (mala paripagam), and

(3) the inflow of Divine Grace (satti nipatham).

Let us explain these briefly:

(1) Equality of deeds: This is the state of mind of the soul which does not attach superiority to good deeds over bad deeds, and which does not prefer good deeds to bad ones, for good deeds as well as bad deeds function as fetters as both of them cause rebirth. Hence that soul would give equal treatment to both kinds of deeds in so far as it does not wish to have the fruits of good deeds.

(2) *Mala paripagam*: This can be explained as follows:—The eternal adjunct of the soul, the 'anavam', causes all ignorance of the soul. When the soul reaches a certain stage in its experience with the Lord, a mental atmosphere is created conducive to the gradual withering away of the ego-sense.

(3) The inflow of Divine Grace: This may be explained as the commencement of the working of the Lord's Grace on the soul, whose ego-sense has already begun to diminish.

The saint makes use of these three terms in regard to his own experience of the Lord's grace.

(g) The Saiva Siddhanta school of philosophy stipulates that higher states of experience of the soul would come to pass only when one fulfils the four-fold worship, namely (1) Sariyai (rendering physical service in temples), (2) Kiriyai (offering actual worship to the Lord in a particular form), (3) Yogam (attunement with the Lord) and (4) Gnanam (perception of the ultimate Reality). The saint also explains his experience in terms of this four-fold worship. Each of these four has four sub-divisions. He declares that he passed through experiences coming under each one of these sub-divisions with the help of the

Grace-Light and that thus he reached the end of Siddhanta. He continues that the end of not only Siddhanta but also of five other 'Anthas', were reached by him. He says:

"Even transcending all of them I had the great experience of the Lord, the 'Sivam', and thereby I attained 'Samarasa-Sanmargam' and embodied immortality."

This statement clearly shows that as a preliminary to attaining the universal path he treaded the path of Saiva Siddhanta as well as of other 'anthas'. The other 'anthas' accord to him, are (1) Vedantham, (2) Bhoodantham, (3) Nadantham, (4) Yogantham and (5) Kalantham. We find these mentioned in the 'Thirumanthiram' also. Quite in accordance with this treatise which has been included among the twelve sacred books of the Saivite religion, the saint holds that of these six 'anthas' only Vedanta and Siddhanta are of major importance. These six 'anthas', it is to be noted, are distinct from the six schools of traditional Indian Philosophy.

The saint holds that Vedanta includes in its folds both 'Bhoodantham' and 'Yogantham' and that Siddhanta includes 'Nadantham' and 'Kalantham'.

We have studied in detail how he made use of Saiva Siddhanta as a preliminary to attaining the universal path. Now we shall take up the question how he reconciled Saiva Siddhanta with Vedanta and arrived at a state of equilibrium between the two.

(ii) *Reconciliation of Saiva Siddhanta with Vedanta*:

(a) *'Vedas and Agamas'*

He addresses the Lord both as the Great Truth expounded by Siddhanta and as the Fruit of Vedanta. But he also makes it clear that he saw with his own eyes the

Lord whom philosophies like Vedanta and Siddhanta searched in vain. These statements show that Vedanta and Siddhanta are estimated by him as different steps to be taken towards the full experience of the Lord and that they are not ends by themselves. They are at par with each other in being the preliminary to the universal path.

The 'Upanishads' are well-known as treatises on Vedanta. The term 'Vedanta' means the end or the fruit of 'Vedas'. The Upanishads themselves are known as Vedanta by virtue of the subject they treat of. They are also considered as 'Vedas'. 'Agamas' are well-known as treatises on Siddhanta. The saint, in accordance with Thirumoolar, declares that both the Vedas and the Agamas propound the same thing, i.e., the union with the Lord, 'the Sivam'. Saiva Siddhanta holds that Saivism has the 'Vedas' as its basis. In other words it considers Saivism as one of the branches of the general path propounded in the 'Vedas'. Some of the Agamas specialise in Saivism. The philosophy codified from the Agamas is called Saiva Siddhanta. The saint states that both the Vedas and the Agamas speak about the Divine dance of the Lord and that they declare that the Lord's manifestation in all the crores of universes is nothing but His Divine cosmic dance. But he also points out the limitations of both the scriptures in perceiving the real nature of this Divine dance. They go, according to him, upto a certain extent, transcending all the elements which end with the 'nada-tatva' (the subtle sound) and also transcending the Para-natham (the Divine sound). But they could not reach the 'Divining space' and had to be content with the Divine Space. These 'spaces' will be explained in the chapter on the saint's experience.

We shall learn there that he could, on reaching the Divine space, realize the Lord's grace. At that juncture he says:

"The noisy cries of the 'Vedas' and the 'Agamas' have

stopped. The differences of religions and philosophies hitherto held high have vanished."

In his personal experience he could drink deep at the spiritual springs and realize the transcendent, himself transcending the conceptual states that could be reached by the scriptures. Hence he says that one cannot consider the study of the four 'Vedas' and the 'Agamas' as one's own personal experience. Even though he treats the 'Vedas' and the 'Agamas' with high deference, he realised their meagreness when compared with one's personal experience of the ineffable. Having himself experienced the ineffable, Transcendent Reality, he considered the differences between the 'Vedas' and 'Agamas' as a matter of little importance. They need not be made much of and people in quest of the knowledge of the Reality need not quarrel with each other, attaching much importance to these differences. It is for them to rise high above the conceptual states of these scriptures, and through personal experience, come into communion with the Lord, as he himself did.

(b) *Advaita*:

He indicates union with the Lord as the meaning of the Upanishads. He says that for the selected few who have known the secret the Lord becomes 'the meaning of the Upanishads', i.e., He takes them in union with Himself, and for the others He acts as the giver of all good and evil in this birth and succeeding ones. There is reason in his indication of the Lord's union as the meaning of the Upanishads. For the Upanishads teach the philosophy of 'Advaita'.

According to some of the interpretations given to the Upanishads, the one Reality appears as ever so many beings of the world; the Reality is otherwise called the '*atman*'. Even though Siddhanta differs from these Upanishadic interpretations in having the 'atman' as different from the Lord, it agrees that there is no difference when both of them come into union. It calls this union 'advaita',

of course with an adjunct, namely, 'Suddha'. We shall learn in the chapter on the saint's experience that he uses the same term to describe his union with the Lord. We shall also learn there that his union with the Lord was an outcome of his realization of the Lord's Grace.

This state of 'advaita' is taken to have come to the saint only after he realized his 'self'. Upto that stage he might have trod the path of 'dvaita' philosophy. Only when he felt his identification with the Lord through his experience of the Grace-Light did he feel that he had the advaitic experience of Vedanta. Hence he described his experience of the union in terms of the famous Vedantic statement *Tat-tvam-asi*. We shall now see what this great statement connotes for him.

Tat Tvam Asi:

In the significant poem entitled, 'The wreath on Natarajapathi' which is specified by him for expressing his 'Grace-experience' he splits this statement into three parts, viz., Tat, Tvam and Asi. He adds the term 'patham' meaning 'state' to each of these parts and makes them as follows:

(1) Tat-patham

(2) Tvam-patham or tom-patham, and

(3) Asi-patham.

He gives brief explanations to these three terms in the poem entitled, 'The wreath on Maha-Deva'. There he qualifies the term 'tvam-patham' with the adjective 'infinite' and the term Asi-patham with the phrase 'coming into union'. In the poem 'The wreath on Natarajapathi' he qualifies the term, 'tat-patham' with the phrase 'coming along'. He refers to 'Asi-patham' in this poem with the words the 'bliss of Asi-patham'. Thus he qualifies all the three terms with adjuncts. First we shall take up the term 'tvam-patham' and learn some of the references

in *Thiruvarutpa* which stand as its explanation. The first reference was quoted above. It indicates the countless nature of the 'tvam-patham'. What does he mean by the 'infinite tvam-patham'? We pointed out above that he holds that the souls are multifarious. We also referred to his experience in which he says, 'I become that'. The Sanskrit term, 'Tvam' means 'Thou'. Hence we may surmise that he interprets this term of the scriptural statement as indicating the soul. Since he clearly states that the souls are multifarious he qualifies this term with the adjunct meaning 'infinite'.

Elsewhere the saint clearly states that the Lord is different from the soul. Hence we may take it that he interprets the term 'tat-patham' as indicating the Lord. In another place he declares that even though a few transcend the wakeful state and experience the Lord as one and the same with themselves, He is different from them and it is not possible to know and experience Him in his fullness. He also states that even though the Lord is immanent in all the elements which make life possible for the souls He is different from them. The Lord's aloofness is further confirmed by a statement occurring in one of his musical compositions. It is as follows:

"He is by Himself; He is aloof."

But the saint qualifies the term, 'tat-patham' with the adjunct meaning 'coming along'. In the musical composition just referred to, he states that the Lord gave him the 'tat-patham'. What does he mean by both of these statements? These may be taken to indicate the Lord's being close to the soul as its very soul.

He explains the term, 'asi-patham' giving to it the adjunct meaning, 'coming into union'. He also mentions this as a blissful union. The Sanskrit term 'Asi' means 'to be'. Putting all these terms together we get, 'Tvam-tat-asi'. The word order has slightly been changed but

the scriptural statement runs as 'tat-tvam-asi'. The word to word meaning of this is: 'You are that'. The saint's interpretation of these three words was hitherto related and his own experience of what he interprets was also referred to. He further states that by giving him this experience the Lord, 'the Sivam', lifted him to the real state and showed him the real path—the real religion. Unforgettingly, he records that the Lord did this because of His boundless Grace. This means that the saint experienced his oneness with the Lord—or the saint 'became the Reality'—only through the Lord's Grace. The chapter on his experience makes it clear that through great compassion he realized the Lord's grace more deeply, and being equipped with consequent great compassion and becoming the embodiment of universal compassion he attained God-Realization, the highest of all his experiences. It is this attainment that he indicates with the scriptural statement, *Tat-tvam-asi*.

Sivam:

As pointed out earlier, he prefers to call by the name, 'Sivam' the ineffable, the Transcendent, the Reality, which is unconceived by any religion or philosophy and which is only to be experienced. According to him this is not to be understood in a limited sphere, as the Sivam conceived by the Saiva Siddhanta. He declares that through experience he realized that the 'Para-Sivam' of Saivism is just like one particle of dust in the nail of the little finger of the left leg of the Lord dancing in the Transcendent space. "Whereas 'Para-Sivam' is conceived as the ultimate, as far as Saivism is concerned, 'Sivam', the Lord, is the one ultimate for all the religions and philosophies of the world", declares the saint. By the term 'Sivam', he wants to indicate the unindicatable, ineffable, indistinguishable Reality which soars high above all conceptual and limited knowledge of each and every religion and philosophy of the world.

Brahman:

It is better to have a note of clarification here. If one prefers to call by the name, "Brahman" the common Reality which is one for all the religions and philosophies, which challenges one's expression and which is incomprehensible, it is all right. The saint seems to warn that if one is to conclude that the soul is Brahman, obviously the common Reality is higher than 'Brahman'. He points out that only an outlook of equipoise regarding the Vedanta and Siddhanta can reveal this Truth.

Beyond the reach of the Vedanta and Siddhanta:

The real experience transcends what both the Vedanta and the Siddhanta declare as the ultimate. The Upanishads which treat the philosophy of Vedanta do conceive, according to the saint, of the experience of the Brahman which is called the 'upasantha experience'. "They aspire to soar still high", he says, "but in vain. The Lord's aloofness is such as they cannot conceive of." In other words the 'tat-patham' (That-ness) is inconceivable by even the Upanishads which succeeded in conceiving the 'advaita' state, which is also a reality. Hence the saint mentions the Lord as both being in the minds of those who experience the 'upasantha state' and as one transcending that experience. Even though he addresses the Lord as the fruit of the pure Vedanta and the Reality declared by the Siddhanta, by personal experience he came to know that the Lord is inconceivable in His fullness by both the philosophies which are genuine, and which do endeavour to conceive of higher states of the Reality.

The other four 'anthas':

It is certain that he intends to differentiate what he means by these four 'anthas' from what is ordinarily understood by the terms, 'natham', 'bhotham', 'yogam', and 'kalai'.

(a) *Kalantham*:

We shall begin with the study of the 'Kalantham'. The

saint himself indicates that this is the first among the six 'anthas'. In some other places he changes the order. But the 'Kalantham' seems to be the first by virtue of its nature.

The term, 'Kalantham' means the end of 'Kalai' (Art). According to Thirumoolar 'Kalai' indicates the group of five Kalais, namely:

(1) Nivrtti Kalai,
(2) Pirathishtai Kalai,
(3) Viddhai Kalai,
(4) Santhi Kalai, and
(5) Santhiyathithai Kalai.

These are held by the Saiva Siddhanta as forming part of an 'Atthuva' named 'Kalai'.

The term, 'Atthuva' means the channel or the path. 'Kalai' is the main channel for the creation of all the universes. That is, the five 'Kalais' enumerated above are manifest in five other 'Atthuva', namely, (1) the mantras, (2) the words of the mantras, (3) the letters of the mantras, (4) the universes, and (5) the elements. The 'Kalais' in their manifestation as the other five 'Atthuvas', are controlled by five powers, namely, (1) Brahma, (2) Vishnu, (3) Rudra, (4) Maheswara, and (5) Sadasiva. The tabular column attached shows the details of the creation of 224 universes.

TABULAR COLUMN SHOWING THE RELATION BETWEEN THE SEVEN "ATTHUVAS"

Mantram (1)	Patham (word) (2)	Vannam (letters) (3)	Puvanam (universe) (4)	Tattuvam (elements) (5)	Kalai (Art) (6)	Kadavul (God) (7)
2	28	1	108	1	Nivrtti	Brahma
2	21	24	56	23	Pirathishtai	Vishnu
2	20	7	27	7	Viddhai	Rudra
2	11	3	18	3	Santhi	Maheswara
3	1	16	15	2	Santhiyathithai	Sadasiva
11	81	51	224	36	5	5

We explained hitherto what the 'Kalais' are. The end of the 'Kalais' is designated as the 'Kalantham'. What is that end? The knowledge of the creation of the universes through the 'Kalais' may embark one in the path of realizing his own 'self'. Hence the beginning of this realization is the end of the 'Kalais'.

To attain this realization one has to eschew one by one all the 36 elements. It is described in the Nadantham.

(b) *Nadantham*:

'Nadam', the subtle sound is the last of the 36 phenomenal elements. These are classified by the school of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy into two major classes namely, the elements of pure primordial energy and those of impure primordial energy. We pointed out earlier that our saint agrees with Saivism in having the elements as 36 in number and in classifying them into two classes. A diagram of the 36 elements, classified, and arranged according to their origin is given in the Appendix.

'Nadam', the subtle sound is otherwise called the 'pranavam'. It is held to be the origin of all the other elements. The saint elsewhere mentions this as 'pranavappiramam'. It is represented generally by the 'mantra', 'Om'. 'Nadantham' would mean, the end of 'nadam', or 'pranavam'. The saint states that at the end of 'nadam' there is a 'space' called, 'Paranadasthalam'—the space of Divine subtle sound. He holds that the soul's experience of itself as independent of all the 36 elements is in a way hearing the Divine subtle sound.

His own experience exemplifies this. In one of his poems he records his experience of hearing this Divine subtle sound. He states in that poem that the sound is an indication of the Lord's 'arrival'. He mentions it as 'soul-experience'. We shall explain his own soul-experience in the next chapter under the sub-heading, 'Self-realization'. It is this phase of the spiritual experience, we may surmise,

that he denotes with the term 'Nadantham'. What does he mean by 'Suddha nadantham'?

We may surmise that he indicates the divine subtle sound as 'Suddha nadam' (Pure nadam). In one of his poems he differentiates between 'Suddhanadantham' and the 'nadantham'. He mentions there, the latter as 'nadanta nadu' and the former as 'Suddha nadanta Veethi'. We may take this as the transition from the divine space to a higher 'space' called by the saint, 'the divining space'. Further, at the end of the 'nadam' there are two divine elements, namely, 'para vindu' and 'para nadam'. Hence while the term 'nadantham' may indicate the 'para vindu' the term 'Suddha nadantham' covers the whole space with its farthest end. The fact that the Lord is transcendent of both the 'para vindu' and 'para nadam' is recorded by the saint in the following line of one of his musical compositions. Its meaning is :

> "He is transcendent, not only of Vindu but also of 'nada veli'."

(c) *Bhodantham*:

The next 'antha' in the order given by the saint himself is 'Bhodantham'. This means the end of 'Bhodam'. Saint Thirumoolar also holds that the next step after 'nadantham' is 'Bhodantham'. The saint qualifies this with the adjunct, 'vimala' (pure). So we may take that this indicates the deliverance of the soul from ego-sense. Thirumoolar's statement helps us in this regard. He says that if the soul goes beyond the 'nadantham' and gets emancipated from the 'darkness' (anavam) it will attain the 'Bhodam'. Here we have to interpret the term, 'Bhodam' as an abbreviation of 'Bhodantham'. His statement means that if the 'Anavam', the source of ignorance is removed, 'Bhodam', the ego-sense also will disappear. Its disappearance marks the stage of 'Bhodantham'.

In the saint's experience, his emancipation from the source of ignorance is associated by him with his Grace-

Experience i.e. his vision of the Grace-Light of the Lord. This experience of his will be treated in detail in the next chapter. It will suffice to point out here that as exemplified by the saint's experience, the experience of the Lord is possible only at the disappearance of the ego-sense.

It is evident from the saint's poems that the transition from the stage of self-realization (nadantham) to the Grace-Realization (Bhodantham) is not easy. His heartrending songs appealing to the Lord, to remove his sufferings, uttered on that occasion will be explained in the next chapter.

(d) *Yoganthain*:

Yogantham means the end of the 'yoga'. The saint differentiates between two kinds of yoga—one the pure and the other the impure. By way of justifying his differentiation he indicates the pure yogins as those who are emancipated from the three-fold bondages which bind the soul.

Since the fruit of the pure yoga is wisdom the term 'yogantham' is qualified with the word, 'gnana'.

It is quite evident from the saint's experience that the pure yoga was rendered possible for him from his youth by the Lord's grace. Hence he indicates the yoga as 'Siva-yoga'. This term means 'the attunement with the Lord'. Hence 'yogantham' would mean the wisdom attained by repeated attunement with the Lord.

No amount of man's effort would bring to him this attunement. It is very difficult to control the mind and make it concentrate on the Lord. The saint states that he controlled all his senses, kept away the knowledge he earned through reading and hearing and left out the practice of viewing the people in terms of caste, creed and religion; but his mind refused to be kept under control. It is the Lord that subjugated it.

Much will be said about the pure yoga, in the next chapter, with reference to the saint's own experience.

As the saint strikes on a common point of Vedanta and the Siddhanta he finds via media among the other 'anthas' also. For this purpose he groups them into two pairs viz., (1) nadantham and bhodantham, (2) yogantham and kalantham. It is to be noted that the via media he finds out, are in a way a compromise between the Vedanta and the Siddhanta for the members of each of the above-mentioned pairs belong to the Vedanta and Siddhanta respectively according to the saint. It is evident from this kind of pairing together that the members of each pair are seemingly different from each other, as the Vedanta and the Siddhanta are. In these three pairs, the first members are bases. The second members are the effects. To explain, 'yoga' (concentration) forms the basis of 'kalai' (art) in its widest sense. 'Nadam' (sound) forms the basis of 'Bhodam' (knowledge). 'Vedam' forms the basis of 'Siddha' (decision). All the three bases in the above three pairs have close affinity. Similar is the case with the three effects. Sound and concentration form the basis of scriptural study. Similarly, knowledge and art give rise to decision. We can easily corroborate these pairs in terms of the saint's songs:

(1) "I should see the common dance between the nadantha and the Bhodantha."

(2) "One of the Holy Feet of the Lord is on yoga and the other on the 'kalai'."

(3) "I should see the common dance between Vedantam and Siddhantam."

The common dance between Vedanta and Siddhanta has been qualified by the significant epithet, 'desirable'. After the first two transitions the dance between the third pair is most desirable for the sequence. The transition between 'yoga' and 'kalai' is symbolised by the Lord's Feet.

When one foot is put forward and planted on the basis of the art (kalai) the other foot is taken off from the concentration (yoga) of the preceding stage. In this way the soul proceeds from stage to stage in its experience.

This completes his contention that all the six anthas though genuine in their contents are found lacking each in its own way, in fulfilling the spiritual ambitions of a real and tireless seeker of Truth. It is really in ardent search of the Reality each 'antha' comes to stay among the seekers and they are successful in their own way in giving satisfaction to the aspirants and in lifting them to high realms in spirituality. Says the saint:

> "Whichever philosophy or the framework of life that the creatures of this world may follow and whichever personal God they may worship that philosophy and that personal God are sure to give them spiritual enhancement."

> "For it is the common Reality that bestows Its Grace on these followers according to the limitations of the spheres of each and every philosophy."

He also states that he learnt that all religions originated and are in vogue only at the Lord's Will and by His Grace. It is here notable, for purposes of comparison and of estimating the values of Saivism and Siddhantic philosophy as formative factors in the emergence of the saint with his universal religion. It is learnt that Saivism, with catholicity of outlook, tolerates the existence of four sets of six religions each. A table of 24 religions with proper appellations for the four sets is included in the Appendix.

Functionally there is no difference between them, though they seem different so far as their contents and ways of dealing with the subject are concerned. Their functional similarity is felt by the saint so characteristically well, that he took it as a revelation by the Lord Himself which came

to him as a matter of immense joy. The functional similarity of all religions consists in pointing to one God. This is styled as the universal aspect of every religion as distinct from its ritualistic aspect. Before the revelation of this universal aspect came to the saint, he felt miserable over the ritualistic conflicts. He was vexed over the sight of quarrels engaged in by the adherents of different philosophies in order to establish the superiority of one philosophy over another.

(4) *Transcendental Path* :

He found out, by direct experience, that the comprehension of the Reality is not confined within the spheres of any one of these philosophies. It was given to him to experience more, in the spiritual heights, than what the Vedanta, the Siddhanta and the other 'anthas' envisaged. "I saw with my own eyes," says he, "and my body and mind melted with love on the sight of, and came into union with, the Lord Whom even the enlightened and freed souls who trod respectively in the paths of the Siddhanta, the Vedanta and the four other 'anthas' and who, renouncing all desires and worldly connections, tried to comprehend, but in vain." It is evident that these great souls should have, in search of the Reality, realised the functional unity of all the six 'anthas'. This unity the saint prefers to call as 'shaḍanta samarasa sanmargam'. This literally means 'the path towards the Truth, which is beyond the reach of the six anthas and hence common to all of them put together.' This is in a way a harmonization between the Vedanta and the Siddhanta in all their aspects. It is certain that this harmonized outlook will yield better results in the spiritual quest. The saint mentions the Lord as the 'true, common space' where all the six philosophies find themselves united and combined. This suggests an unbiassed study of all the philosophies, keeping in mind that they co-ordinate with, and complement each other in seeking the Reality.

Even the compromised outlook does not help as in the case of the enlightened and freed souls cited by the saint in the above-mentioned stanza of his poem. The fact that

he had a wider comprehension and experience of the Reality than theirs indicates that the path trodden by him was beyond the 'common path of the six anthas'. He says that one gets this experience oneself being equipped with a consciousness called 'the initiator-wakeful consciousness.'[1] He calls his chosen path 'Suddha Samarasa Sanmargam', meaning the universal religion, having as its preliminaries all the religions and philosophies hitherto known, followed, and adhered to in this country. Hence he indicates the knowledge attained newly by him as 'utthara-gnana' as against the knowledge gained by the existing philosophies which he calls purva-gnana'. 'Purvam' means the old; 'uttharam' means the subsequent. 'Utthara-gnana' denotes the 'subsequent knowledge' of the Lord. "Experience gained by one who is equipped with 'intiator-waeful consciousness'," says the saint, "is only the opening or inauguration of the Universal Path." Quite new petals of rare experiences will be coming off one by one, till one reaches the finale among the consciousness that can be indicated as 'one beyond the pure God-wakeful consciousness.'[2] The plausibility and relevancy of his statement are well nigh testified by his own personal experience.

The saint emerged in the Universal Path at the wake of the experience of the Reality he had, in the state of the 'initiator-wakeful consciousness'. He calls this experience 'his realization of the Lord's Grace'. He also calls this as the one got in the 'divining space'. As soon as he emerged out of this experience, with an all-comprehensive, exalted, universal religion, he jumped in supreme joy, for he had got the very thing he wanted, to get himself out of all the obsessions of his own mind regarding the differences among the human beings, namely, caste, creed, religion, adherence to this or that philosophy, etc., and to make all the people of this world, whom he considered verily as his kith and kin, come round, abandoning their cherished religions, philosophies, castes, creeds and various levels in societies and the numerous quarrels thereupon. The universal religion would put an end to the age-long disputes among the adherents

1 Guru Duriyam. 2 Siva Duriyam.

of different philosophies. It would put forth the 'Sivam', the common Reality, as the only Truth and ideal to be cherished and aimed at by humanity.

It is to be noted here that he did not hold the Saivite religion as superior to any other, even though it was his favourite for a very long time. Fully nourished by Saivism, he soared even high, and as a consequence of a higher experience he declared: "Each of the established religions like Saivism hold, individually a God, for its ultimate goal. There is no plurality in the Ultimate. That Ultimate is this."

Because it is his realization of the Lord's grace that landed him in the universal religion, enhancing his compassion for his fellow-beings to a much higher level, making him realise that the very nature of the soul is compassion and transmuting him into an embodiment of compassion, he named the universal path as *Arul Neri* (the path of Grace).

The path of Grace tries to harmonize all the existing religions and philosophies with the definite purpose of not only promoting peaceful co-existence among their adherents and followers but also of inculcating in their minds a harmony in outlook regarding their own and other faiths and philosophies, thus freeing their minds from various obsessions which are a great hindrance to developing the soul's very nature, namely compassion. People, in spite of their innate brotherhood, are split up into various religious groups and into groups adhering to different philosophies. Each group tries to establish the superiority of its own faith and philosophy as a result of which all society is disrupted. Not only this. According to the saint, promoting human compassion is the only way for salvation. All sorts of differences existing in society, chiefly religious, are a main hindrance to the promotion of compassion. Since the universal religion would remove the obsession of differences among religions and promote human compassion, enabling one to receive the Lord's Grace, the saint calls it "the path of Grace." Realization of the Lord's Grace enables the soul to know itself as 'a space of grace', that is, as one whose very nature is com-

passion. As soon as the soul thus realizes itself it becomes qualified for achieving God-realization. This is testified to by the direct experience of the saint. Hence the saint states that the main means stipulated in the universal religion is 'one becoming the embodiment of grace.' This transmutation of soul is amply testified to by our saint's experience. He expresses his impression of one of those experiences as follows:

> "O Father, you have made yourself, and the form of your Sakti of Grace, and myself into one."

Message of the Universal Religion :

Let us now consider what message the universal religion delivers to the world. The chief ideal of this religion consists in insisting on the promotion of universal brotherhood. By way of promoting this, the chief mental obsessions of the people regarding the differences among the religions and philosophies are sought to be removed by delivering the message of the common ideal of all religions and philosophies, viz., the attaining of the Common Reality. Various 'Gods' are there, of course, and they do have their place in the control of the universes, but they all function at the Will of the Lord who dances in the 'space of Grace'. "He is the unique, Supreme Lord for all the universes, just as there is only one soul in a body and not two or three," says the saint. For that one Reality, the Supreme, the nameless, the formless, and the unidentified with any quality, he gives the name 'Sivam' and rejoices at the realization of that Common Reality through direct experience. He asserts that this realization is the foremost landmark of the 'Suddha-Sanmarga', the universal religion. Consequently, he asserts that the names of the Gods of all religions, both ancient and modern, native and foreign in origin, are the names of the one Supreme Lord. He gives the succession of the names as follows: Aruka, Buddha, Ayan, Narayana, Aran, Ati-Sivam, Sadha-Sivam, Satti-Sivam, Paramam, Parabramham, Suddhabramham and Suddha-Sivam and the host of other names found in the modern

and foreign religions. This is, in a way, equivalent to saying that the Supreme has no name, for He is unindicated to the core. The saint affirms his loyal service to this one Supreme but not to the ideal gods of the existing religions, whom he is not prepared to estimate even as a bit of straw. As far as the existing religions are concerned, he refutes them all. Hence, his is a revolutionary path. He openly comes out with the declaration, as an atheist would do, that all philosophies and religions are false. He dissuades the people from following them. This declaration and dissuasion, severed from their context and background of his rich experience, would certainly present him as an atheist. But with the Supreme knowledge originated in direct experience of the Common Reality, he concludes his abovementioned declaration and dissuasion with the request to the people to perceive the fact of the Supreme exisence of one Common Reality, the 'Sivam'. Once this Supreme fact is perceived, all the religions and arts, and the ideals and knowledge envisaged by them, and the personal Gods worshipped in religions would appear as child's play, he says.

'It is for those who are apart from and beyond the religions and castes," says he, "that any direct relation with the Lord is possible."

This perception, along with the knowledge that the tribes, castes, creeds and different social strata are farce, will remove all the barriers in the path of congenial human relationship all over the world, which should be developed through compassionate outlook and service. So, next to the perception of the common Reality, compassion is the other landmark of the saint's universal religion. In fact, this perception and unconditional compassion towards all fellow-beings make his path universal.

Worship of Light :

The next significant aspect of the universal religion is the worship of light. He experienced the Lord as the Light within the Light within the Light. These three aspects of Light

are to be distinguished. The first is the God-Light. It is also known as guiding light. The second is the living Light guided by the first. The third is the white Light which is experienced by the soul. All his experiences in the higher realm of spirituality were chiefly related to a vision of a mount of light. His vision of the Lord as Light, in the spot between the eye-brows, deepened step by step, and at a certain stage, he saw the light within his very 'self' (soul) which in itself appeared to him as an effulgent entity. He calls that effulgence 'anmap-pirakasam'. He also indicates it as the 'Hall of pure wisdom (gnana-sabhai). In due course, he perceived the Effulgence Supreme ('Arutperunjoti') within this 'Hall of pure wisdom'. He wished sincerely that all the people in this world should get the experience of Grace-Light which he got. By way of symbolizing his experience he made his disciples to build a specially designed Hall of Wisdom for universal worship at Parvatipuram of South Arcot District. He preferred to call the village by the name 'uttara-gnana-siddhipuram' (literally meaning, the sacred place where emerged the knowledge of the Common Reality, hitherto unknown to any religion and philosophy). Another name he preferred was, 'uttara-gnana-chidambaram'. He also preferred to indicate the place with the name 'Vadalur', for according to him, it symbolized 'the spot between the eye-brows' which is known as 'vadal' and which is the place for the experience of one's own self.

The hall was named by him as 'satya-gnana-sabha' (Hall of True Wisdom). The following is the description of the hall, as found in the book written by T. V. Govindarajulu Chetty:

> "This Sabha which stands on an octagonal masonry cellar-terrace resembling a full-blown lotus flower, is surmounted by a lofty cone-shaped roofing overlaid by thick plates of brass more or less after the Gothic fashion and crowned with a gilded 'stupi' at the top. It overlooks an aerial frontage secured by ornamental railings and a gate-way. The whole structure, exhibiting as it

does the conception and style quite of his own, is of a peculiar and quaint specimen of architectural beauty."

The hall thus constructed by him for universal worship has no idol as its deity. To symbolize the Triple Light he installed a huge lamp on a raised platform at one end of the hall and put a large glass-sheet five feet in height in front of the lamp.

The symbolization involved is explained by T. V. Govindarajulu Chetty as follows:

A. The lotus-like building is compared to the human body, the Temple of God which is the highest form of His creation and which is but eight spans by one's own hand.

B. The Dipa points to the Jothi or the All-pervading spirit whose replica it is that is reflected in the microscopic shape of a phosphorescent-like ray on the white transparent tissue mentioned in C below and which is placed just in the centre of the face where the root of the nose and the eye-brows from either side, all meet together.

C. The glass represents the pure white transparent tissue forming the Sanctum Sanctorum or the seat of the Holy of Holies as pointed out in B above.

The saint provided seven curtains of different colours in front of the lamp so as to screen it from the sight of the people. These seven curtains symbolize, as he himself explains, the powers which screen the effulgence and powers of 'the self' from the normal perception of the mind, and keep it uncomprehended. One tabular column in the Appendix shows the succession of these curtains, the powers they represent and their function.

The powers represented by the curtains are the real barriers in between the mental perception and the self-realization and in between the self-realization and higher experiences of the Lord. The Lord, with His Grace, removes, in the case of those who worship Him with ardent, heart-melting love

and through compassionate service to their fellow-beings, these barriers one by one, revealing their own 'selves'—as well as His Supreme Effulgence of Grace. Symbolically of this, the seven curtains in the Hall of Wisdom designed by the saint, normally screen the light behind and on certain occasions, they are removed one by one, revealing the light to the sight of the devotees.

The significance of removing the curtains is that the people who see this should have for themselves the vision of the Supreme Grace-Light in the inner apartment of their very souls. The Hall was constructed by the saint only as a replica of what he experienced within. Referring to this experience he says, "I have found within myself the hall of true wisdom." This is, according to him, the greatest ideal to be attained by human beings. Hence he named his religion also 'the path of light' (*oli-neri*). He insisted on one's ardent desire to have this vision of light within one's own soul through personal experience. He advised the people not to entangle themselves in the contradictory arguments found in religious treatises. The learned works could only fill them with illusions. But they could believe their inner eyes which could reveal the Lord, for He bestows His Grace only on those who develop the faculty of inward comprehension. "Even the scriptures" he contended, "do not speak the Truth threadbare. They only resort to suggestive expressions in order to indicate it."

(5) *Embodied Immortality* :

The next significant factor of his religion is its insistence on one's getting educated in the art of deathlessness. He says that it is the real education one should have. As pointed out earlier, he holds that the ultimate ideal of human existence is the enjoying of the everlasting bliss, equipping oneself with a deathless body. The details of his own attainments in this direction are described in a separate chapter of this book. In fact, this is the greatest and noblest message his religion gives to this world. It is to be noted here that his religion, which advocates non-killing and non-violence to the utmost levels, has for its ideal the deathless

life. It is but natural to hope that the end should be in consonance with the means. His religion is at once the path of non-killing and the path leading to deathlessness.

We shall learn in the chapter on his attainments that he attained deathlessness, which came on him as a natural outcome of his higher experiences of the Lord's Grace-Light. He instantly felt the earnest desire in him to enable the people of this world, whom he never considered as different from himself, to attain this embodied immortality. He felt his integration with all his fellow-beings through his soul-melting love for them. Every inch of him shuddered at the sight of death. He asked the people whether such an end was acceptable to them. Was it not for them to find out a way to escape from the circle of death and birth? "The whole world knows that death is as true as sunshine. But what measures have been taken to avert that end which to this day comes on the life inevitably," he asks. What about the religions? Have they done anything to enable the people to defy death? He quotes his experience of the Lord's guidance to him to tread in the path of 'suddha-sanmargam' (universal religion) without following the existing religions which do not at all help to defy death. "In fact," he says, "the religions allow death to multiply." What does he mean by this? In one of his precepts, he mentions that Saivite religion and its branches do contain some suggestions regarding certain devices to attain deathlessness. But he disallows making use of devices and insists on inner experience, for inner experience leads one to Divinity whereas the devices keep one still worldly. Here, it is difficult to find out what he mentions as the devices suggested in these religions. "As far as the other religions are concerned," he says, "they do not suggest anything in the field of embodied immortality." Hence he hits at them with the above complaint at the same time declaring that his 'suddha-sanmarga' will lead one to the portals of immortality. He says:

"I do not advocate deathlessness with any worldly ambition in my mind. I say all these out of compassion

for you. I earnestly wish you to get the same bliss that I get. It is not I that speak; it is indeed the Lord in me that makes me a tool, for conveying this message to you. The Lord, the Common Reality, dances with all His radiant grace. Make up your mind to embrace him."

The Clarion Call:

He deemed it as a part of his compassionate service to the world to spread the universal religion. He did not mind the fact that many might blame him for his remarks about the reputed religions and philosophies of the land. He was ready to receive them as blessings. He says, 'I have no personal honour. It is long since I discarded it.' This explains his readiness to receive the blame of the people. We learnt that as a consequence of higher experiences in the spiritual realms, i.e., losing his 'self-identification' and coming into spontaneous union with the Lord, he had come to possess extreme humility. He lost himself in the Lord and felt himself as a mere tool in His hands. Hence he says, 'My words are really His'. So it is to be noted that his preaching of the universal religion was part and parcel of his experience. He did not do it considering himself as a great teacher. He did what the Will of the Lord made him do. He submitted his whole to that Will. This feeling of submission made him subsequently feel that he was the son of the Lord. Even then he did not feel proud. Nor did he want the people to praise or eulogise him. When some of his followers began to worship him he requested them humbly to consider him as one among them. He pointed out to them that 'Sivam' was the only Lord to be worshipped and that men are not to be worshipped. He wanted to remain as the last-grade servant of all. In this he reminds one of prophet Mohamed, who issued a definite injunction on the followers of Islam not to worship him.

Feeling the Will of the Lord, the saint gives the clarion call to all humanity at large, to come round as mem-

bers of one and the same family and live with perfect amity and love. He wants them to do two things: (1) to be compassionate and (2) to enquire about the existence of a common Reality and frequently to pray to the Lord confessing their defects, drawbacks, errors and sins.

Four-fold Discipline:

To put the universal religion into practice he stipulates a four-fold discipline which relates to the whole personality of man. The four divisions of the discipline are:

(1) the discipline of senses and organs of actions,

(2) the discipline of the mind,

(3) the discipline of life or the manner of treating other people, and

(4) the discipline of soul.

The first discipline consists of an ethical code of conduct. It includes the control of the senses and good practices. Control of senses consists in hearing hymns on God and not hearing cruel and harsh words; touching things and people without lust, but with compassion; looking soberly; not minding about the tastes of food and not desiring to enjoy good smell. The good practices include nonviolence, doing positive good to the people, keeping the body in tact by moderate food habits and moderate indulgence in pleasure, and with the help of medicines and some other means if affected, wearing neat dress and a foot-wear while going about.

The mental discipline consists in meditating on God and thereby concentrating the mind. The preliminary for this is fixing the mind in the spot between the eye-brows. Further, not to think of evil things or matters, not to enquire into other's mistakes and ill-conduct, not to give room

for thoughts on self-importance and averting both desire and contempt are subsidiary mental disciplines.

The manner of treating others is based on the equality of all, whether men or women and whether belonging to one caste or another and following one religion or any other. Similarly all differences regarding social status, origin of families and lineages, are to be discarded. People of other nations should also be treated as those of one's own.

The discipline of the soul is that of feeling an integration with fellow-beings through unconditional, deep love, and finally to become one with the whole universe by experiencing the Lord in ever-widening 'space' of one's own self' and by realizing that the Lord is to be likewise experienced by each and every soul within itself and that therefore there is a natural, integral 'oneness' among all the beings of the universe. This knowledge at once consists in the experience of the unity in diversity at the level of the souls, and at the level of the relation between the Lord Supreme and the individual soul.

Devotional Prayer:

Frequent praying to God is a significant factor in the saint's life as well as in the religion preached by him. Every step of the experience insisted on by him involves prayers which need devotion. The devotional path propagated in the middle period by both the Saivite and Vaishnavite saints, is re-invigorated and enriched by the saint. Significantly of his universal religion, he makes a modification, saying that one should have devotion to one's brother-souls and love to the Lord. He uses the term 'bhakti' to denote the devotion to the soul, in other words the melting of the mind at the sight of suffering souls. He uses the term 'love' to denote the 'melting of the soul', in other words, the heightened submission of the soul to God, forgetting its creatureliness at least for the moment. He states emphatically that only with this love can one attain the Bliss Supreme.

Abundance of love for the Lord naturally leads one to continuously think of Him, move with full of emotion and melt like candle-stick with uninterrupted tears rolling down one's cheeks. The emotion will find expression in prayers and songs. The saint summons the worldly to come around and sing in praise of the Lord, with abundance of love in their hearts for Him. He states that the Lord comes as the sweetest experience in the inner realms of those who engage in spontaneous, devotional singing. Further, he says, "It is they who attain the embodied immortality."

The devotional prayer to God that the saint advocates does not demand any worldly benefits from Him. "Nothing less of Him is needed for the soul imbibed with true love for Him," says he. It is the attainment of the Lord that his religion insists on. If one takes this as the ideal, one should renounce desire of any sort. For one who develops love for the Lord this renunciation will automatically come. "If there is in one's heart the real zeal to see the Lord," says the saint, "one will be always in tears without feeling desire even for taking food." This statement reiterates the importance and inevitability of devotion and love in the path of attaining the Reality. Love multiplies the concentration of one's mind. "More concentration", says the saint, "than that attained by penance can be got through devotional prayer."

The Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sangam:

It was always an irresistible wish with the saint to be among the devotees who possess an universal outlook, and join with them in singing the praise of the Lord. It is learnt that, to fulfil this wish he established a guild of devotees, 'Samarasa Veda Sanmarga Sangam' by name. This name is significant, for it denotes a step in the gradual emergence of the saint in the universal religion. Thozhuvur Velayuda Mudaliar mentions in his letter to the author of the book, "Hints on Esoteric Theosophy" that this 'Sangam' was founded by the saint in the year 1867.

Anyhow the saint does not claim to have newly founded the 'Sangam'. He holds that the 'Sangam' is as old as the experience of the Common Reality. His contention is that this experience has been there for a very long time. Not only he but also many of his predecessors have had this experience. He mentions them in general as the seers of the 'Samarasa Suddha Sanmargam' in one of his appeals to the Lord. Saint Gnanasambandhar, who guided him was his spiritual guide, according to his own statements, in all experiences, including the Realization of God, which he indicates as the experience of 'Samarasa Sanmargam'. He is praised by him as the first teacher of the 'Path of Grace', the synonym of 'Samarasa Suddha Sanmargam'.

But historically, no organization with the name 'Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sangam' is known to have existed before the saint's time. It is true that there have been at all periods spiritual masters who reached the zenith of experience. It is they who are mentioned by the saint as 'the seers of the Samarasa Suddha Sanmargam'. But it was the saint who gave a lead in propagating the universal religion. Accordingly, he calls the universal religion experienced by him as his. This interpretation is necessarily to be given, lest one should mistake that the saint claims as his the universal religion which by virtue of being universal, cannot be one's own. It is for this reason that he did not claim to be the president of this guild he established. He held the Lord Himself as its president and felt glad for the Lord had made him one among the members of the guild, enjoying their appreciation.

His call to the people to follow the universal religion is in the form of inviting them to join the 'Sanmarga Sangam'.

Conclusion:

The experience of our saint on which he based the universal religion he propagated will be studied in detail in

the next chapter. The universal religion and the philosophy pertaining to it deserve to be given still deeper consideration so that their import in the context of the present day world and for ever may be more clearly understood and steps accordingly taken to improve the conditions at both the national and international levels; for the saint foresaw a world in which Universal Brotherhood would be the rule of the day, over against all kinds of differences and distinctions.

8. TRIANGLE OF DEVOTION, SERVICE AND SPIRITUALITY

Introductory:

The saint's experience is mystic in the full sense of the term. Let us see how the term 'mystic' has been explained by different scholars. In the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences it is stated that mysticism in the proper sense of the term is the combination of the religio-mystical and the philosophico-mystical type of experience. Mr. R. M. Jones, in his article 'Mysticism'—an introductory' in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, distinguishes mysticism from mystical experiences and explains the former as the historic doctrine of the relationship and the potential union of the human soul with ultimate reality. Mystical experience, he explains, 'is the direct intercourse with God.' The Encyclopaedia Brittanica explains that in the religious side of mysticism, it appears in connection with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the highest. The saint's mystical experience seems to indicate both the religio-mystical and the philosophico-mystical types and a higher type even. Transcending these aspects, the saint has realized 'metamsomatosis', the transfiguration of the physical body. This will be discussed further in a later chapter.

Throughout his life in the physical body the saint yearned deeply to have mystical experience and his yearning was fulfilled step by step. This gradual fulfilment was effected by means of compassionate service for all living

beings as well as by his ardent devotion to God. These two, as exemplified by his experience, grow together each helping the other. By coming into "a conscious, vital realization of his oneness with the Infinite Life and the opening of himself fully to this divine inflow, he opened himself to the same great inspirations as have all the prophets, seers, sages and saviours in the world's history, all men of truly great and mighty power."[1]

He was one of the most rare, who from their childhood were empowered to face boldly and overcome easily the five senses and who, with their mind concentrated upon God to such an extent that the mind itself dissolved in the vision of God, had direct intercourse with Him and consequently came to wield miraculous powers. Such rare men are called in India "Siddhas". Their mystical way of experiencing the highest is called 'Siddha Margam'. The saint was a "Siddha". He, however, humbly claims to have attained the highest knowledge and power through God's grace.

This chapter seeks, not to reason upon his mystical experiences which "proved to be a force that he could live by", but to lay them bare as they were and to study their preliminaries and the way they moulded his personality. This chapter also seeks to bring to light the saint's experience among his fellowmen for whom he had a very soft and warm corner in his heart. His heart melted at their sufferings caused by poverty, ignorance, lack of control over the senses, indisciplined mind and disbelief in God. With extreme compassion he felt himself one with them, and strangely enough experienced their sufferings and felt as if he himself led the indisciplined, sense-indulging and devotionless life which engendered the sufferings. It is not to be taken for granted that his mind was immune to sensual onslaughts. As long as one lives in the physical body one is affected by the clamour of the senses. The

1. *In tune with the Infinite,* Ralph Waldo Trinne, page 8.

question can only be how they affect one and whether the one faces them successfully or submits to them passively. A careful study of *Thiruvarutpa* will reveal that the saint, in fact, had occasionally to give correctives to his mind which was prone to fall a prey to the temptation of the senses owing to his sympathetic identification with all suffering souls.

The senses are normally too strong to be subdued and the temptations aroused by them will come upon the mind like an assault. They can put even a saint in an apparent predicament. References to correctives and repentance are so numerous throughout the saint's expressions that an uncritical mind may easily be led to misunderstand his character.

To sum up, the saint's religious experiences and the experiences that came to him through his extreme compassion form the content of this chapter.

His mundane experience:

His earlier visions: Firstly the various stages of his soul's struggle towards the higher experience are sketched, to be followed by the detailed aspects of his God-realization. The saint's life began with a mystical vision. It was the vision of a space in the place of Lord Nataraja at Chidambaram. It was related in a previous chapter that it happened when he was an infant and that the impression that it made in his mind was so deep that he remembered it after so many years, i.e., when he again went to Chidambaram in his 34th year. It was an unique instance that the saint recollected the experience which he had in the fifth month of his life. Unless the experience had made a deep impression in his infant mind he could not have recollected it after so long a time. The higher experience he had at the time of the recollection is related to the recollected experience. In both instances the experience is signified by the term 'space', which in-

dicates the experience of God transcendent. This 'space' was revealed to him in the first instance as the veil before Lord Nataraja was lifted. It was again vividly revealed to him in the latter instance as the inner veils hindering the soul from experiencing the highest were lifted by God's grace. Lifting the veil in the first instance served as a symbolic act for him. Hence his sight of the Lord as none other than 'space'. But that sight might have lasted for a second or so. As a result, the child's heart was filled with so much joy that it laughed unusually loud. The story goes that the priest of the temple told its parents that it seemed to him that the child was the son of the Lord. We are going to see that later the saint realized his filial relationship to the Lord and got the Lord's approval for that.

The second vision he had was that of Lord Muruga of Thiruttanigai. We learn from the saint's reference that it happened in his ninth year. The story goes that he saw the appearance of the Lord in a mirror. But there is no evidence for it in *Thiruvarutpa*. It should have been certainly a trance in which he had the vision of the Lord. Of course there were preliminaries for this vision. They were related in one of the previous chapters. It was shown there with internal evidence that even avoiding attendance at school he resorted frequently to loneliness and probably indulged in introspection. He might have practised "vaci-yoga", otherwise called "kriya-yoga". That is why when he later referred to this vision he revealed the fact that 'the Lord came when he was young and was seated in between his eye-brows.'

The vision of Lord Muruga had far-reaching implications in the saint's life. It was a very good augury in his spiritual pilgrimage and literary creations both of which proceeded hand in hand. Previous to the vision he could have been stranded without proper guidance from a spiritual master. Through this vision he found the guide in Lord Muruga. The vision and its impression kindled in

him knowledge hitherto unknown and a surging eagerness to have the vision of the Lord uninterruptedly and to be one with him like milk and water. Little by little, by performing worship to the Lord he found his mind fully concentrated upon Him. He says in the poem entitled, "The wreath on Deivamani" that Lord Muruga has instructed him that through His worship and the service of the souls one can attain purity of one's imagination and yogic concentration; the soul's mundane experiences were to be dispelled so that one would be in a position to reach the real wisdom and permanent state of attunement.

His Soul's Struggle:

But there was yet time for him to realise this knowledge through his own experience. Meanwhile, there was quite a big gap which was a period of his soul's struggle. He longed to have the vision of the Lord again. He yearned and yearned miserably for it. Soul-stirring is his appeal to the Lord when he asks whether His heart is so stubborn that a soft corner cannot be given to him, who wept in disappointment. Was he to be left unguided in this world which was under the illusive spell of 'Maya', full of stone-hearted men who would never help the poor but always seek material welfare, and women who for their own ends kindle lust in men? What safety was there for him against his own mind, which was not attuned enough to march on towards his Lord? When he brooded over all this his anguish knew no bounds. He believed that another vision of the Lord would ward off his sufferings. His repeated requests met with no response and his deep-felt sorrow opened up the spring of poesy in him. This was how the first pieces of poetry sprang forth from his heart. He yearned for the Lord's grace as the thirsty would yearn for water. He regretted that the days passing away in vain without the vision of the Lord were many. "How long would it take", he pined, "for me to swim across the sea of grief?" He longed for a day to come when the Lord would permanently occupy his mind. He was anxious that

the day should come soon lest he should die without enjoying it. But he at once consoled himself that there was the Lord's name and he knew to sing in praise of it and through the grace of the Lord he would inflict death upon death itself. He felt so sure of himself receiving the grace of the Lord and thereby defying death and attaining eternity that he rejoiced that death would not approach him. This strong belief he has given expression to in the very first pieces of poetry he sang after he had the vision. This strain continues till the last pieces of his poetry. His ideal to defy death and his attainment of embodied immortality are the core of his experience. The seeds for this rare experience were there in his mind even at so early an age as nine or ten. But when ecstasy was gone, when he brooded over the immaturity of his mind and the disaster that awaited the worldly life in the end, doubts arose and put him in grief. This sort of vacillation is found throughout the poems he composed in his younger days.

Worship of Lord Siva:

At Thiruvotriyur too he first worshipped Lord Muruga. When he saw Lord Muruga in his vision for the first time, even then he saw no difference between Him and Lord Siva. He praised Him giving the attributes usually given to Lord Siva. He considered both the gods as different expressions of the one Supreme Being for which there is no form or name. Hence he soon switched over to the worship of Lord Siva at Thiruvotriyur. Presently he was more attracted by another form of Siva, his dancing manifestation in which He is called "Thyagesar." This switching over is not only found at this stage but also in the higher stages of his experience. Ultimately the form of the Supreme which he realized both within and without was *Arutperunjyoti* (Supreme grace-light). Each switch over marks a change in his experience, thereby marking a development in his maturity. For one's experience depends upon one's mental as well as physical maturity. As he was only a boy of nine at the time of one of the previous visions the Supreme revealed itself in the form of Muruga, the

Lord of youth. As he grew in age he developed the tendency of adoring the Supreme in the form of Siva, with which form higher experiences were always identified in Saiva faith. This change was only a further revealing of the Supreme, which as the saint himself says, stands inexhaustible by any amount of unveiling. One cannot oneself know God but one can only experience Him as and when He reveals Himself to one. "That awed conviction of the reality", writes Evelyn Underhill in her book named *Worship,* "of the Eternal over against us, that awareness of the Absolute, that sense of God; . . . it comes to him (man) where he is as a message from another order; God disclosing Himself to and in His creation by 'diverse portions and diverse manners' conditioned by the limitations of the humble creature he has made".

Melting away of the mind:

He adored the Lord to the fullest extent so that he used to see the idol for hours together quite unaware of his hunger. In the poem 'Instructing the mind' he describes the beauty of Lord Siva from head to feet and says that if one remains seeing the beauty of the Lord one's hunger will not be felt. He says in the invocatory stanza of "The wreath on Mahadeva" that the beautiful figure of the Lord makes his stone-like heart melt away. The dancing figure of Thyagesar made him have an experience in which his mind was dissolved and he saw many visions that he had not seen upto that time. The attraction of Thyagesar for him marked, as it has been stated before, a major switch-over in his worship. The experience he had at the sight of Lord Thyagesar was unique in that he felt the dissolution of his mind. The previous experiences were only melting of the heart. But this one was the complete absence of the mind faculty. Hence he could see new things. At first his mind derived pleasure at the sight of the Lord. The sense of sight was attached to the figure of the Lord. Hence the pleasure. Then, gradually "supra-sensory suggestions were made to him" by the sense of sight itself.

Then ultimately his thinking faculty stopped functioning. On recollection of this experience he said that he had forgotten himself, but he felt that the vision he had had at that time surpassed the power of expression. He felt blessed over this new experience of his.

It seems that time and again he felt eagerness to have the vision of the Lord. Whenever he sought God his mind was relieved from sufferings. On other occasions he turned pale with sufferings.

He felt God as his only refuge even if He was to despise him. He besought God to save him from the worldly life which had come upon him by the vagaries of his disturbed mind. Seeing that his requests were not heeded to, he even began to rebuke God. Standing before the temple at Tiruvotriyur he asked Him whether it was proper on His part to keep quiet, not even asking him the reason for his going over there. Was it right for Him to be there still without bidding him a welcome? Was it right for Him to cast a look as if upon a foe? Was he not His son?

He reminded God of his bestowing His vision on him in his youth and he sought His grace to come again before him. He gently reminded Him that it would be a blame on Him if he did not show him mercy. His appeals meeting with no success, he, like Sri Ramakrishna, his North Indian contemporary, grew desperate and in sheer agony, was ready even to commit suicide. He renewed his appeal to the Lord to give him the company of His devotees. He entreated Him to show him the right path, which would lead to immortality. Sometimes he was consoled by the feeling that God would take it as an obligation on Himself to guide him in the true path.

Urge for self-realization:

In the latter part of the period of his frequent visits to Tiruvotriyur he began gradually to feel an urge within himself to have 'darshan' of Sri Nataraja at Chidambaram.

As the memory of having had it in his infant age was kindled in him he began to feel the pangs of separation. He reproved himself for having so long forgotten the Lord who dances at the 'space' at Chidambaram as the very manifestation of grace. One of his important requests to God at that period was to give him self-realization. As the crops are deprived of their feeding by the weeds, he was deprived of higher experiences by the physical and the environmental phenomena of the world which in Indian philosophy are named "Tatvas" (Elements). According to philosophy, the elements veil the inner self so perfectly and build 'a self of flesh-and-blood conventionality' that the soul mistakes itself as the body in which it dwells and thereby causes itself innumerable sufferings. The saint entreats God to remove the "weeds" that cause him sufferings and redeem him for himself. This request marks a definite milestone in his pilgrimage towards higher experience. This indicates his innate urge to have himself realized by himself which, as we are going to see, was granted to him at the next stage of his experience.

He hoped that another vision of the Lord would enable him to root out the delusion and sufferings caused by the senses. He wanted a mind which would never forget God's feet. He wished God's picture to be irrevocably inscribed in his mind. Were this to be possible he need not care for any other thing. Unless this was possible by the grace of the Lord his mind would not come under his control, but would continue to roam about. Without control over his mind he felt that he could not progress in the spiritual field. So he appealed to the Lord to help him ascend the spiritual ladder, and live in tune with His will instead of being tossed about by his own volitions.

He stated that he had learnt the arts unknown to him hitherto, through inspiration which he felt as God's instruction and expressed his wish to have the instruction realized. In this statement he referred to a mystical experience he had which, to quote the words of William James, "seemed to him to be a state of knowledge". William James adds

that "they are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect." The saint's wish to have the instruction realized in terms of experience indicates that he wished to probe still further into the depths of truth that was revealed to him once. This is the keynote of his soul's struggle. While others unknowingly led a worldly life, he could not follow suit because it was given to him early enough to taste the cosmic consciousness. He wished to have more and more of this experience for which he sought God's grace. It was not to come so easily. Occasionally he had the chances of the vision of God while he was in the habit of worshipping at Tiruvotriyur but he regretted later that he had missed to hold fast to God's feet and to get emancipated from all sufferings. His failure was due to his unbounded compassion to all souls. Should it have been well-bounded there would have been no occasion of such frequent failure at all. This explains the many instances of his reproving his mind. He sent forth soul-stirring appeals to God to shower upon him His infinite grace so that he might reform the ways of his mind and try to live in tune with God's will. His ultimate aim was to attain in this very life of his the Eternal and perfect bliss that had not been known to him before. But he had to go a long way to reach this ultimate goal. Getting no response from the Lord he felt desperate. He felt stranded unable to know what was God's will regarding his future. Confronted by fear, he cried in agony: "O Lord! The Light of Chidambaram! What shall I do if you don't have mercy upon me. To whom shall I represent my helpless state?"

The saint began to transcend the interest in Tiruvotriyur. He became fully occupied with the longing for the Lord of Chidambaram. The reason is not far to seek. The interest is to be understood not in terms of forms of the Lord but in terms of the different 'spaces' as planes of experience. His inability to go there at once deepened his grief. He awaited the chance and when it came he availed himself of it. His departure for Chidambaram marked nearly the end of his soul's struggle. Even after arriving at Chidam-

baram this struggle continued for some time. But in the poem 'The Love Wreath' he says that the Lord gave him experience through which he understood all the elements, from the five elements to the 'natham'. This marks his attainment of self-realization.

He himself has reviewed his experience in this stage as a struggle in ascension to higher levels of experience. He says in the poem 'The Love Wreath', dedicated to Chidambaram, that he was helped by God's grace whenever he was hindered in his spiritual progress. He has also expressed his gratitude for the guidance given inwardly by his esteemed guide, saint Gnanasambandar, whenever he wavered from the spiritual path. To those who may ask how this could be since Gnanasambandar belonged to a previous age a statement from Ralph Waldo Trine may give a convincing reply. He says:

"In our mental lives we can either keep hold of the rudder and so determine exactly what course we take, what points we touch, or we can fail to do this, and failing, we drift, and are blown hither and thither by every passing breeze. And so, on the contrary, welcome should be the thought, for thus we may draw to us the influence and the aid of the greatest, the noblest, and the best who lived on the earth, whatever the time, wherever the place."[1]

Then, at a certain stage, the saint found himself able to continue his onward steps in the spiritual path. This marks the stage of his self-realization. This mental condition was exactly what he wanted.

Self-realization :

"Self-realization is but a step from the base to the sublime." The soul living in the physical body normally mistakes itself as the body with flesh and blood. The facts that 'we are related to the Infinite through our soul and at the same time, we are related to the material universe about us through our physical life,' should be harmonized. Such har-

1. Ralph Waldo Trine, *In tune with the Infinite*, page 22.

monization is not easy. That is why the saint, in the period of his struggle, pleads to the Lord to help him grow out of the physical plane. Even after going to Chidambaram this quest continued in him. This is revealed in one of the poems sung by him after he went there. He addresses the moon and requests her to tell him a device by which to realize his own self. He indicates self-realization with the term, 'soul experience.'

Then he seems to have had the clear and complete vision of his self as different from the physical body and the 'surrounding phenomena.' That is, he realized 'himself' transcendent of the physical universe as well as the manifestations of the five pure elements. He felt himself as the eternal devotee of the Lord who is at once manifest in and transcendent of all the universe. His deliverance came through this vision which, as he says, was given him by the Lord's grace.

The realization for which the saint yearned upto that period was attained by him. But it reached him only when he acquired a certain developed stage of his attunement. In his poem addressed to the moon, cited above, requesting her to let him know a device for self-realization, he reveals his wish for realizing the 'serpent-power' which is said to be hidden in the human body. Without realizing this hidden power he could not have the full use of 'vasi-yoga.' Once this power is awakened strenuous efforts would be made by the 'Yogins' to raise it through the central path step by step with the help of 'vasi'—the breath. It is said in treatises on 'yoga' that on its way through the 'nadi' in the spinal column there are six centres of experience. The reaching of this power at each of these centres is a separate experience. The saint must have reached a stage in his 'yogic practice' when he could fully concentrate his mind on the temple between his eye-brows by the aid of the awakened serpent-power. Then it must have become possible for him to remain thus for longer durations of time keeping his mind steadily fixed on that spot. This is revealed from the precepts he later gave his disciples. He says that the

temple between the eye-brows is imbued with 'spiritual knowledge'. This knowledge is to be acquired by the soul, not obviously through the waking consciousness known as rational consciousness which works through the mind. He enumerates four kinds of consciousness namely (1) the sense-consciousness, (2) the rational consciousness, (3) human-life consciousness, and (4) the universal-life consciousness. The last one can be made to function only by the steady and continuous practice of 'yoga' in which the temple between the eye-brows is concentrated upon. The saint entreats his disciples to keep their mind steadily fixed in the said spot between the eye-brows because in his own experience, it became one day possible for him to tap the source of the universal-life consciousness, and to have many new visions.

At that juncture the rational consciousness which works through the mind could have had nothing to do in his case. Dr. S.R. Ranganathan defines the term 'seer' as one who has insight unmediated by the intellect or the primary senses. The reason is that the seer's knowledge of anything is 'thing-dependent' and not 'knower-dependent' at all.

The saint records his experience of the obliteration of the phenomena along with the other aspects of self-realization in his poem dedicated to saint 'Gnanasambandar'. One of the stanzas of that poem expresses his gratitude for saint Gnanasambandar's guidance in realizing his 'self'. This gives in a nut-shell what self-realization is.

It can be interpreted as indicating two aspects of 'self-realization,' namely :

(1) the 'self' transcending the elements one by one, and

(2) the emergence of the 'self' at a higher space called 'Divine Space' identifying itself automatically with it but faintly having a sense of separate existence.

(i) *The 'self' transcending the elements* :

It was pointed out above that the saint's experience of his self is of the philosophico-mystical type, that is, his understanding of the schools of philosophy already in existence had its definite echo in his experience. As for the phenomenal elements he accepts their enumeration and classification made by the Saiva Siddhanta School of Philosophy but gives different names to the first two classes. In the poem in which he enumerates these elements he refers to the experiences of 'Siva-yogis' who, transcending these elements, realize the higher experiences. He firmly believed that the various presiding deities, by whose efforts the different elements function, do their duties according to the will of the Lord and the Lord Himself is immanent in all the elements. Hence he pleaded with the Lord to make him emerge distinctly from the elements. His request was granted. His waking consciousness was sublimated into essential consciousness or, according to him, 'universal-life consciousness.' This sublimation implies his complete control of the elements and his transcending them one by one which he claims to have accomplished. This is in conformity with what he was inwardly informed by saint Gnanasambandar. The fact that he actually had in his experience the perception of each and every element as distinct from his self is clear in a line of a stanza of the poem entitled, 'The Love-Wreath.'

"You showed me this and that as well as my state."

In this statement the term, 'this' symbolizes something intimate to the 'self' in order to raise it up, and the term, 'that' symbolizes the next stage of presenting higher experience to the 'self'. This fact is clarified by the saint in another poem entitled, 'The wreath on the effulgence of grace.' In one of its stanzas he says that one of the two Holy Feet of the Lord enables us to move about and have our life by the aid of the 'life-instruments', and the other separates them from us in order to lift us to the higher experience.

Another instance from his poem entitled, 'The verse on *Arutperunjyoti* is as follows:

> "The Supreme grace-light is realized when the sense of the physical body and the subtle body is transcended."

What is meant by this transcendence? The evolving soul understands every element that enables it to have the mundane experience as distinct from itself and transcends it by means of higher experience through proper perspective and control. This amounts to complete detachment from the senses and from the world which is felt and experienced by the senses.

Now let us see what is meant by the phrase 'higher experience.'

In order to have a clear insight into higher experience—'spaces' as the saint would have them, let us cite the significant quotations from the saint (See the Appendix).

The first five spaces namely, elemental, subtle, life, art and pure ones indicate the entire elements of phenomenal, worldly experiences. Of the 36 elements the elemental space comprises of the first 20. The subtle space forms the four parts of the subtle body, namely, mind, intellect, chitta, and 'ahankara', as distinct from the gross body cited above. The life enmeshed within these two bodies is indicated as life-space and it is struggling to get out of them in order to have higher experience. The same is true of the other two spaces above the 'life-space.' That is, life is equally entangled with the pseudo-art and purity of the phenomenal world. By the grace of God the veiling power is set aside, so that life emerges out of the five spaces noted above.

The experience that comes to the soul when it is in the state of identifying itself with this phenomenal universe is 'phenomenal experience.' The experiences that come when the soul transcends the phenomenal universe are higher ones including, according to the saint, the experience of 'self',

the experience of God's grace and God-realization. All these higher experiences besides the phenomenal ones are attainable only through God's grace and not in the least through the soul's efforts.

The higher experiences are signified by the saint as the other seven spaces, namely,

(6) the Divine space,

(7) the Transcendent space,

(8) the Divining space,

(9) the Middle space,

(10) the Self-divine space,

(11) the Grand space, and

(12) the Grand Blissful space.

Further, the saint sheds a flood of light on the various categories of experience, namely, waking, dreaming, sleeping, wakeful, and blissful ones. There is also another set of five stages comprising all categories of experience namely, life (jiva), pure (nirmala), divine (para), initiator (guru) and Godly (Siva) consciousness. Of these five, the first is multiplied by the first three categories of experience. Thus we get three states of consciousness. The rest have five states each. In this way we get an additional twenty states. These stages and their states of consciousness are connected with the twelve spaces enumerated above. See the Appendix for the tabular column containing all these 23 states of consciousness and showing their connection with 12 spaces.

The sixth 'space' cited above, namely 'divine space' is the first higher experience as it is the fourth state of consciousness, namely 'duriya' (wakeful state). It can be

construed as a transitional 'space' between the phenomenal and the higher experiences.

Taking the phenomenal world above indicated as the first five spaces into consideration, we are led to understand by the saint that there are two kinds of elements. One of them is considered to be the base leading to the other, i.e, its respective sublime counterpart. Thus each of the five elements has got its double aspects.

Now let us see how these aspects manifest in the saint's life.

Of the five stages of experience given above, the last three may be said to be related to the 'self-realization', 'realization of God's grace' and 'God-realization', respectively.

By means of self-realization the saint transcended the phenomenal elements, perfectly understanding the way in which each of them was binding him. It is clear from the description of the various stages of experience given in the tabular column (Appendix No. VII) using the saint's terminology and explanations, that he might be in the divine-waking, divine-dreaming and divine-sleeping states on the eve of his realizing his own self. Hence he says that in 'soul-experience' (self-realization), the soul transcends the elements one by one by identifying itself with the unique divine space. This means that the soul evolves to a higher plane with a new set of consciousness to perceive visions unknown. The medium for this process for transition from the phenomenal world to Divinity is styled as 'pure-waking', 'pure-dreaming' and 'pure-sleeping' states.

The important thing signified by the statement viz., the self identifies itself with the 'divine space' is its experience of God who is beyond the ordinary comprehension of human beings. This comprehension as exemplified in the Vedas has gone upto 'pure sound' (Natham) and has grown too

feeble to get beyond it. "The Vedas", says the saint, "are unable to conceive God beyond 'Natham,' for there is no other means to grasp and express God's existence with. He says further that the 'Agamas' are capable of transcending this limit and of reaching 'the space divine'; but on reaching there they are not able to grasp God even after searching Him in various ways. Now he himself has awakened in that very space. He indicates it as divine-waking state of consciousness.

With this new consciousness, given him by God's grace he had the insight of the presence of the 'transcending Light' which he refers to as 'Divine Light' permeating both within and without. He describes this experience as that of communion with the Lord transcendent. Later relating this experience he says to his own mind that whenever the latter left him, his soul was undisturbed like a lamp undisturbed by breeze and he, transcending the 'natham', perceived a 'space' where he could see a mount of light that never could have appeared in all the universe. Then gradually he could see a Light within that Light. He wondered whether it was the Light of gold, the purity of which the world had never known, or whether it was the Light of the grace of the Lord, which is inherent in it.

This is one aspect of his experience. Another aspect is his feeling the touch of the Holy Feet of the Lord. Let us explain what it signifies. The Lord's placing His Holy Feet on the devotee's head is the specific act of initiation. It is crystal-clear in the lives of the evolved souls. It has got distinct phases of divine evolution, spiritual maturity, by means of graded initiation. In the divine life and sayings of the saint we distinctly discern the three stages of the initiation, namely,

(1) self-realization,

(2) grace-realization, and

(3) god-realization.

The term 'realization' is here used in a concrete sense experienced by such great souls as the saint. We can come across scholars of higher aspirations such as Evelyn Underhill giving expression to the specific acts of initiation by God. She writes:

"Thus some form or degree of sacramentalism must enter into human worship; whether of the diffuse and generalized kind which "finds the inward in the outward," or of the more definite sort which embodies sacred mysteries and divine communications in specific acts. In it we first see clearly man's deep instinct for the supernatural, his realization of "one thing working in another thing", spirit giving significance to sense. For the universality of sacraments is not, as is sometimes thought, a witness to the Divine Immanence. It is rather a proclamation of the Divine Transcendence; man's realization of the gap between the creator and the creature—certain tragic disharmony—and the need of a bridge, an ordained path along which the Eternal Perfect may penetrate Time and the things of time. Here man is pressed by God immanent to prepare the matrix; but it is God transcendent who pours into it His quickening love to cleanse, feed and transform."[2]

In the saint's life the initiation into religious experience may be said to have been performed by the Lord in his fifth month itself. The first mystical vision he had at Chidambaram in that infant stage may be taken as 'the initiation by glance' (nayana deeksha). His vision of Lord Muruga which he had in his ninth year may be taken as 'the initiation by words' (vasika deeksha). His experience again at Chidambaram, of the Lord's Holy Feet at the wake of his 'self-realization' may be taken as 'the initiation by touch' (sparsa deeksha).

Yet another aspect of his experience is his feeling his union with the Lord. This is clear from one of his addresses to the Lord. He addresses the Lord, stating that he

2. Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*, pages 45-46.

saw his own self at first, then the Lord in himself and at last both merging into one entity. It is this union or identity that is signified in the unique line of his poem dedicated to saint Gnanasambandar which runs as follows:

"You shall reach the unique Divine Space and identify yourself with it."

On returning to the normal waking consciousness he requests the Lord to remove the sense of wonder which is nothing but incomplete comprehension of his own self merging with the Lord.

Realizing through attunement his 'own self' and the Transcendent within him, the saint found the secret of the everlasting joy of the 'siddhas' who have spoken at length about embodied immortality. Before arriving at this stage, he was vexed that he was worse than the low, who, shrouded in ignorance are caught in the vicious circle of birth and death; that he devoted his time for vain learning; that he did not know of the learning in embodied immortality. After the attainment of his own self he says that the Lord showed him the state of that immortality. It means that the Lord gave him glimpse of the secret of defying death even though he is in the physical tenement which is subject to dissolution. His gradual attainment of it is the subject matter underlying his experience henceforth and a separate and detailed study of that attainment as collaborated by his preachings and with the traditional yogic practices, follows this chapter.

Another important feature of his 'self-realization' is that he realized fully that he was the Son of God. Even though in his earlier poems he has addressed the Lord, "thou art my rightful father, mother, relative and guide," now (in his 'self-realization') his filial relationship with the Lord receives a vivid expression. Realizing that he was distinct from the "elements", and realizing the Light of the Lord within himself, he openly declared that he was the Son of God. But he makes this declaration modestly.

He says that the Lord told him: "Do not fear, my son, I bestow my grace upon thee; live in this world as you like. You will become love-embodied and pure-hearted on having 'darshan' of the cosmic dance at Chidambaram. Live for ever drinking deep of the floods of bliss".

This statement shows the Lord's approval of him as His Son. This is the first place in *Thiru-arutpa* in which the saint records this approval of the Lord. This reminds us of the declaration of Jesus Christ about himself as the Son of God. A quotation from the book *Worship* by Evelyn Underhill explains the filial relationship with the Lord.

"Real worship as our Lord taught it," writes Evelyn Underhill, "begins by an act of simple contemplation: the lifting up of the eye of the soul towards the Being of God, the confident claim to kinship with God, and an act of filial devotion born of that claim. The soul opens its eyes upon Reality and discovers itself to be a child of the Eternal Perfect and the essence of its worship is to be a total devotion to His interests, hallowing his name and co-operating in the action of His Creative Will."

Periyapuranam, the life history of the devotees of God, informs us of the approval of the Lord of the sonship of saint Gnanasambandar and saint Sandeesar.

The saint was only a devotee when he felt the Lord as immanent in the physical universe, especially in the idols at the temple, which are the representations of the Lord's various manifestations. As soon as he realized himself as transcendent of elements and the Lord as the Light within himself, "the gradual process of his identity with the ultimate Reality" was revealed to him. Hence his filial relationship to the Lord was renewed and it grew stronger than any other relationship.

Seeing his own 'self' as transcendental light, it was obvious to the saint that the differences of caste, creed and

religion which are related to the physical universe are irrelevant. The social relations of his physical body with his environment were felt clearly as distinct from the higher stage of spiritual maturity. He says that the 'siddhas' see no difference between their friends and foes. Probably it is due to this "self-realization". All sympathies and antipathies would last only so long as the soul identifies itself with the physical universe. When it transcends it, they loose their relevance. The saint who had himself become a 'siddha' through 'self-realization' was powerful enough to rise above the bonds of caste, creed and religion and to follow the true, *common path of grace.*

Having realized his 'self' the saint requests the Lord to save him from further pangs of delusion. On having self-realization he saw the Lord as one who dances in the 'space divine'. He says that he came to understand through the grace of the Lord that the scriptures aim at 'realizing' this dance. He states further that he wishes in all earnestness to realize the cosmic dance of the Lord in his heart of heart so that he may come into communion with Him and leave off his sense of difference between himself and his Lord. It would be possible only when the faculty of his mind got completely sublimated without returning to the sense of "elements". He enjoyed such a communion with the Lord in a stage which he described as the 'stage of realizing God's grace'.

Realization of God's Grace :

Self-realization, as understood by the saint through the guidance of St. Gnanasambandar is not only a preliminary but an invariable and indispensable accompaniment of the Realization of God's grace. This may mean that it is but a continuation of the soul's higher experience which begins in 'self-realization'. It was pointed out in the foregoing study that, transcending the physical phenomena, the saint experienced 'his own self' as an effulgent light and then discerned 'a light within the light'. In that inner light, he believed, he had the glimpse of the Lord. He says that the Lord Himself revealed this to him. The Lord for

whom he had yearned for so long a time thus revealed Himself to him and disappeared. That experience was so exhilarating that the disappearance of the Lord caused him ineffable grief. He could not bear the pangs of separation. This state of unspeakable suffering of a soul which has once experienced the vision of God is called the 'dark night of the soul'. His dependence upon the Lord from time immemorial was the revelation he got through the rare experience of the Lord. *Sivagnanabotham,* the chief of the treatises on Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy, explains the depending nature of the soul with an appropriate simile. It says:

> "The swing suspended on ropes would oscillate hither and thither. As soon as the ropes are cut off it would fall down and rest on the floor. Just like this the soul relying upon the senses oscillates hither and thither. As soon as it realizes itself as one quite different from the senses it automatically begins to rely upon the Holy Feet of the Lord".

The saint himself reviews his experience by saying metaphorically:

> "If one goes across (the river) from this bank, one will reach the opposite bank. The thing to be found there is the Sugar of Chidambaram."

This would mean that instead of deriving pleasure from sense-objects, the transcended soul gets pleasure directly from the Lord. The saint also expresses his dependence upon the Lord in the following lines:

(1) "I sing only if you make me sing; I worship you only if you cause me to worship...."

(2) "All things are under your control. Have I got any right over them?"

This complete resignation to the divine Feet is called (by Saiva Siddhanta works) *Anma-darisanam.*

The other nine of the 'ten acts' leading the soul to the highest realization are to be understood in this connection. (1) *Anma-rupam,* the fourth, means wisdom with its fruits. *Anma-darisanam* is the fifth. It has been explained above. (2) *Anma suddhi,* the sixth, signifies the soul's sight of the Lord in itself getting its phenomenal aspect dissolved by the insight. Before attaining these three in order, the soul has to find its own form as distinct from the forms of elements—*Tatva rupam;* next, the soul finds all the elements as mere inertia—*Tatva darisanam*; and then the soul alienates itself from the elements by the grace of God —*Tatva Suddhi.* These are the first three acts concerning the elements, leading upto those of the soul. Those will lead the soul upto the four acts of the divine experience. Let us see what they are. *Siva-rupam,* the seventh, implies that the soul clearly sees God as its only guide. *Siva-darisanam,* the eighth, signifies the fact that the soul identifies the Lord's form with various aspects of this universe and thus delights in it. *Siva-yogam,* the ninth, means that the soul begins to act by means of the Divine Grace. *Siva-bhogam,* the tenth, points out the fact of the final redemption of the soul. In this highest state of experience there is a mutual transference of everything between the soul and its Lord.

The above elucidation of the ten acts means that after 'self-realization', the soul feels all the higher experiences that come to it, not as the fruits of its own efforts but as those of the Lord's.

Here one should be careful against confounding this state of resignation to the Lord's Will with the bound state of the unrealized soul which is a mere puppet at the hands of Fate. It has no independence either. The power that controls it is Fate. But in the case of a realized soul, the

direct controlling Power is God's grace. The rule of Fate gives place to the rule of Grace.

The sense of resignation to the Lord's Will is revealed in the request made to Him by the saint for attaining the realization of His grace:

"Lord, I dedicate myself unto Thee. I do not have the least independence. Will you bless me with 'the realization of the grace-Light' and thereby make my body transfigured into those of purity, light and wisdom or will you leave me to suffer? I do not know your will."[3]

This complete surrender is pointedly referred to in a significant line in the 6th book. The saint says that, when the Lord appeared before him in the form of the guiding light, he stood up in reverence. Then the Lord was surprised and asked him why he stood up—an act of ego? The saint felt it and found a complete mutual transference of everything between them.

The grace-Light is a significant phrase in *Thiru-arutpa.* The other significant phrase is "The Supreme grace-Light." His attainment of these 'Lights' one by one signifies two stages in his higher experience. Mr. Izhavazhaganar points out the difference between these phrases and explains the first as 'the effulgent presence of the Lord' inherent in the soul's feeling. In the ignorant state of the soul, its capacity for perceiving the Lord's grace and of perceiving itself as universal Life-consciousness would be dormant while the rational consciousness would be at work. At realization, the rational consciousness would merge in the 'universal life-consciousness' and both of them would become one with the sense of the Lord's grace, whence the Light of grace would become radiant within and without the body in which the realized soul lives.

3. Book VI, Part I, poem 10, stanza 1.

The saint repeatedly entreats the Lord to bless him with the realization of the grace-light. He feared the possible hindrances on the way to the realization of grace. Those hindrances seemed to him so insurmountable that he grew more and more cautious before he could attain the grace of God in full.

He says:

"I am going to see and worship the Feet of our Lord; of course I walked in a certain path to have the vision of the Holy Feet. But now I cannot see where that path lies. Anyhow, I have started. I do not know whether I shall take the right and easy path or I fall on a jungle path....I am not definite that I can see the Feet."[4]

In another stanza of the same poem he says:

"I came to know a little of the Dance performed by the Lord of Bliss at Chidambaram. Shall I still have the full view of it?"[5]

It was pointed out earlier that in the process of realizing his own self he was shown the Holy Feet and Head of the Lord. He wishes to have the same experience repeated. Such recurrence is considered by the saint as indispensable for higher experience.

Even though the saint, during his experience of his self, felt the dissolution of his mind faculty, it did not dissolve entirely till full spiritual maturity had been attained. In one of his poems which plead to the Lord to remove his delusions through higher experience, he says that his mind, held apart, probably at the wake of his self-realization, came again to him and misled him. Even then he did not divert his aim from the Lord to other objects.

"When this stage in the higher experience comes off, more firmness in self-realization is possible," says the saint.

4. Book VI, Part I, poem 11, stanza 9.
5. *Ibid*: stanza 4.

Until this state comes, the vagaries of the mind would continue. So he grows cautious to know whether his 'self-realization' would be perfect and result in the realization of the grace whereby the permanent process of sublimation of mind would come to pass.

He feels that there were many subjective hindrances in his path to the higher realization. The greatest hindrance he visualized was his inadequate and disturbing compassion for suffering fellow-beings. He addresses the Lord thus on this point:

> "O my leader, praised and worshipped by all leaders! Even today, my mind, my stabilizing wisdom and myself are having our duties performed in terms of sympathy for fellow-beings. What shall I do? My life is none other than this sympathy. The one is not clearly distinct from the other at all. If this stabilizing sympathy goes off how can I live? My life itself will go off with it. This is clear to your Divine comprehension."[6]

Realizing that God has already immortalized him, the saint finds it difficult to reconcile this immortality with the interruption of higher experience. The fact that one is immortal by the grace of God goes ill together with the fact of serious sufferings owing to one's inadequate and disturbing sympathy. So he demands of the Lord that He should bless him with adequate stabilizing sympathy or divine compassion in order to reconcile his immortality with undisturbed bliss. For immortality without divine experience—higher levels of experience—is empty. This is revealed in one of the stanzas of the famous poem, entitled "An intense appeal from the son of God". The saint addresses God in the following terms:

> "O Lord, I always think of your command alone; I try to fulfil it in order to immortalize myself by means of

6. Book VI, Part I, poem 13, stanza 98.

stabilizing compassion for all souls. But the weakness of my mind and body makes it impossible for me to fulfil your command. This pains me most."

But how to attain the stabilizing compassion? The saint pleads to the Lord to give him the nectar of His grace. Elsewhere he mentions this nectar as the 'nectar of grace in the moon' and he requests the Lord 'to open the door' to enable him to drink it. What do the term, 'moon' and the phrase, 'opening the door' signify? Let us probe into the saint's references to these in order to know their significance. First about " the opening of the door".

(1) One of the musical compositions of the saint conveys the following:

"There are saints who see the lock of the eye-brows and the closed door on which the lock is fixed; who without getting desperate, open the lock and the door, drink the nectar available there and thereby establish the grace-Light in the very centre of their souls".

(2) One of his precepts is as follows:

"If the Light of grace is not lit in our body which is the house of our spirit, (soul or 'self'), the darkness of ignorance will gather there and the life of our spirit in this body will come to an end very soon."

"So, it is good that we get the central eye of our temple opened with the blessings of a spiritual guide. For, one who gets his central eye opened will have all higher experience as if having them in broad day light. He is a pure saint. If he casts his eye upon a corpse, with compassion, it will regain life. If he gets provoked by any one his eye will burn him. To open this eye there are a door and a lock. One should open the lock with the key of grace, distinctly styled as great compassion for all souls. When we become the embodiment of compassion we can have the above experience."

From these references we learn that the phrase 'opening the door' means the opening of the temple of our forehead, i.e. tapping the sources of the more essential kind of consciousness, more subtle than that which functioned during the realization of 'self'. This tapping is possible only to those who are blessed with great compassion. This tapping is bound to reveal the 'inner light', the form of the Lord, and enable the soul to come into close contact with it. This union would make the soul an embodiment of compassion. This is certainly a development in the soul, since, from being in possession of great compassion, it grows to be an embodiment of compassion. So the 'inner light' that effects this growth is called by the saint 'grace-Light'. This compassion-divine, will in its turn enable the soul to have more of divine experiences of the grace-Light, thereby earning more wisdom about the higher realms. In other words the compassion-divine and the experience of grace-Light grow together, each helping the other. This fact can be learnt from a cross study of the references made by the saint.

(1) In the poem entitled, 'An intense appeal from the Son of God' he exhibits very clearly his ardent wish to relieve his fellow-beings of their manifold sufferings. In order to do it perfectly and without even a tinge of 'egotism' which would spoil his mind and would cause sufferings, he awaits the recurrence of the vision of the Inner Light and his soul's communion with it. The remembrance of his previous experience was fresh in him. As pointed out above, he expected every minute to have it again. He further states very clearly in this poem that he could not bear the sight of suffering souls and that they filled him with utter fear and serious concern. But he does not covet anything for himself; nor does he fear anything. All his concern is about the relief of the souls from their sufferings. He entreats God's grace to enable him to render selfless service to his fellow-men in removing their sufferings. He does not wish to con-

fine himself in any way in the service of his fellow-men. He sincerely feels that he should render loving service to all souls of the whole universe thereby hallowing the Lord's grace. He goes to the extent of wishing to be able to raise the dead and make them devotees of the Lord. He wishes to do positive good to souls at any cost. He wishes that all those who approach him should receive sweetness and delight through his services. For accomplishing all these rare powers he entreats the Lord to give him the experience of the grace-Light.

(2) He felt that loving service to suffering souls would in its turn reveal his Lord more closely and it would enable him to enjoy the bliss of the Lord without interruption of any sort.

(3) The sense of ego was still there in him. By its influence he felt that his services to the souls were in vain. For he could not render them deeming himself doing the Lord's work. Hence he accuses himself of wasting his days without doing compassionate service. In fact he does not want to waste his time. He implores the Lord to root out his sense of egotism by giving him the experience of the grace-Light, also known as 'the nectar of grace'.

The cross references cited hitherto show clearly that the saint had known that compassion and the experience of grace-Light grow together, each helping the other. In order to attain stabilizing compassion he pleaded to the Lord to give him first the experience of the grace-Light.

It is seen from one of the saint's appeals for the realization of the grace-Light that the Lord inwardly informed him that He would 'arrive' at a certain moment. This moment is the time of maturity of every soul in general on

the spiritual plane. The saint being aware of his nearness to that moment thus gives expression to his awareness. He felt on a certain day that the particular moment had come. Having no experience as expected he appealed to the Lord through heartrending poems. Some of them may be quoted here:

(1) "My father, what avails it that I implore you repeatedly? Come this moment and remove all my fears and sufferings and fulfil all my wishes. Otherwise I will end my life".

(2) "Among all your devotees coming into this world generation after generation, it is only I that am stranded, not being given to know the proper path. Is it acceptable for your good heart that I, a poor creature, suffer to the utmost level? Is it proper? Is it just? Is it in conformity with virtue? The Benevolent who dances in the cosmos! Am I not your son? Are you not my Father? I cannot suffer any more, seeing the sufferings of my fellow-souls. Pray, give me this moment your grace-Light".

(3) "Take everything which is mine. Give me everything that is yours."

(4) "Shall I forget you? I cannot. If I do, I shall be no more. I cannot exist even for a moment without your memory. Will you forget me? What shall I do then? Where shall I go? To whom shall I express my grief? Even if you forget me, your grace will surely not forget me."

From these passages it is clear that the saint, knowing through inspiration the ripe moment of the Lord's 'arrival,' that is, the experience of seeing the transcendent Light, felt it impossible to live for a moment without communion with the Lord. He offered his life to God in order to get it transformed in God.

It can be inferred from one of the saint's poems that he kept awake throughout a certain night weeping bitterly for the Lord's experience. Having no response he says:

> "The day too has dawned, my Lord. Quite unable to bear your separation I am calling continuously unto Thee, my eyes full of tears. I find no response from Thee. Dost thou not hear me, my Lord? I know no other refuge than Thee."

This night is likely to have been the one to synchronize with 'the juncture' which he signifies in many of his poems, as the ripe moment for the Lord's arrival. For, the very same poem which records the above mentioned pathetic appeal also records in its latter part his actual experience of the Lord in the form of the grace-Light and his relief from all his grievances. Now of that experience.

He says that the Lord entered into him and came into an inseparable contact with him. This means that the saint enjoyed the Lord, feeling Him with his body, mind, soul and intellect. He further says that the Lord put him in the cradle of great compassion and fed him the nectar of Divine grace; He embraced him, gave him the 'all-performing power' and made him immortal.

It is this kind of union with the Lord that he had longed to have. This extraordinary grasp of all the constituent elements of grace-experience reveals the extraordinary grounding of his previous births. He has expressed this longing in one of his soul-stirring appeals for the grace-Light of the Lord. The appeal is in the form of a poem. He sums up in that poem all that he has requested for so far and expects at that moment from the Lord:

> "O the foremost in my mind, the Lord of Divine Dance! Kindly open at this moment the door; show the grand grace-Light; give me the divine nectar to drink; enter

into my body, mind, soul and intellect and be there for limitless time performing in me the Dance of grace."

This expectation and the realization cited just above show very clearly that the 'opening of the door' i.e., opening the temple in the forehead, revealing the grace-Light, giving the divine nectar of grace and the 'all-performing power' and the embodied immortality are all elements of the 'Realization of God's grace'.

In the saint's Realization of God's grace one of the salient points to be stressed is his drinking the divine nectar of grace. It was pointed above that for drinking this he implored the Lord to 'open the door'. It is by drinking this nectar that he expected to attain stabilizing compassion and he appealed accordingly through the poem entitled 'An intense appeal from the Son of God'. It is the 'all-performing power' that would be given by the Lord subsequently with which he hoped to remove all the sufferings of all the souls. It is with the stabilizing compassion perpetually springing in his heart through his continued experience of the grace-Light of the Lord, and with the 'all-performing power' that he wished to take out a mission of compassion to all the countries in order to spread there the greatness of the Lord's grace. In fact, it is his life's mission, as well as of every evolved soul.

Before entering into the details of the 'all-performing power' let us probe into the saint's various mentions of the nectar, both before and after attaining it.

Divine Nectar :

His first mention of the divine nectar after attaining it has been cited above. He states then that the Lord put him in the cradle of great compassion and gave him the divine nectar of grace. The way he distinguishes between 'compassion' and 'grace' is to be carefully noted and is to be compared with two of the precepts he later gave to his disciples. Through one of them he informed them that

'grace' is the compassion of the Lord; man's sympathy towards all beings is called compassion; just as one produces greater light with the help of a smaller one, one should attain the grace of the Lord, which is the greater compassion, by means of the smaller one, namely, human compassion.

The other precept was cited in a foregoing page. It says that in order to light the grace-Light in one's body one should 'open the lock and the door' of one's temple with the key of grace called great compassion. This 'grace' indicates human compassion. This, the saint says, is the nature of the soul. "If one becomes an embodiment of this compassion," he continues, "one can do wonders". It is clear from the precepts and experiences of the saint that by means of compassion towards his fellow-beings (*Jeeva-Karunyam*) he developed love for God. It is this love that makes him yearn for the grace-Light of the Lord. All the poems expressing his yearning for the Lord's communion in the form of the 'Inner Light' show his abiding love for Him. It is this love that makes his 'Yogic practices' successful. For 'yogic practices' with out abiding love for God prove to be a failure in the spiritual life. They may be successful as far as rousing the 'serpent power'; but once it is roused, it should be directed through the spinal cord and brought to the temple in the forehead. When that power reaches the various 'spots of experience' in the spinal column and the throat, the practitioner is filled with new energy. He is now able to do some abnormal things. If he does not possess ardent love for God, such attainments through 'yoga' will be useful only for selfish purposes for a temporary period. But for abiding love, the disastrous fall of the soul is certain. It cannot take him along the spiritual path and he will not be able to win the grace of God. From the beginning the saint was feeling that it was the Lord that enabled him to practice 'vasi', the breath. So, because of his unassailable love, his yogic practices culminated in the opening of the temple, i.e., as we have already explained, in the tapping of the sources of more essential consciousness more subtle

than that which functioned at the wake of his 'self-realization'. On 'the opening of the temple' he had the sight of the Lord's grace-Light. Therefore he describes this grace-Light as the camphor-Light which burns in the centre of the temple without even a little smoke. He says further that the sight of it was blissful to his eyes. He sings in one of his songs that the Lord made him understand the state of 'yoga' in 24 minutes one evening and gave him to realize the fruits of that 'yoga' the next morning. He came into such a close contact with the grace-Light that he verily identified himself with it.

It is this 'union' that, as cited above, is explained by the saint as the Lord's entering into his body, mind, soul and intellect. It may be remembered that we pointed out in the foregoing study of his 'self-realization' that as a consequence of that experience he felt his oneness with all other souls. Then it was only a feeling. Now in the higher experience of the 'union with the Lord' in terms of 'inner Light' (Light within the Light of his own soul) his feeling of oneness with all souls took on an added intensity. He became an embodiment of compassion. He himself explains this state as the 'expression of the Lord's grace through human souls.'

It is to become an embodiment of compassion that he had yearned for. His appeals are thus amply granted. Since the experience of the Lord transformed him into grace itself and since he felt to the core of his soul that it was through the unending grace of the Lord that He revealed Himself to him, enabling him to have the more essential consciousness to perceive the revelation as the Inner-Light, he names it 'the grace-Light'. The bliss he enjoyed spiritually at his union with the grace-Light is indicated by him as the divine nectar of grace. He also mentions this nectar as 'the divine nectar of grace-Light'. As he attained this union through his compassion towards souls and the Lord's grace he says that the Lord put him in the cradle of great compassion and gave him the nectar

of grace. Imbibing this nectar, the saint became an embodiment of compassion. This attainment reminds us of that of saint Kannappar whom poet Sekkizhar describes as becoming 'an embodiment of love' through the grace-Light of the Lord.

The saint experienced the Lord's union with his physical body also. His higher experience had its consummation in the co-ordination of his body with his soul in enjoying the bliss of the Lord's grace. The 'opening of the door', as explained above, would indicate the opening of the temple in the saint's body. He says elsewhere that in the temple is available nectar which would be as sweet as the sugar candy. It is this nectar he mentions as 'the nectar of the moon'. What does this 'moon' indicate?

Treatises on divine union throw a flood of light on this point. One of them says:

> "Since the Lord dwells in the central part of the head called 'the sphere of the moon' the nectar of the moon is being secreted there and it is falling in drops. The effect of this spreads throughout the body. If this nectar likens honey, ghee and milk, one who tastes it becomes fit to live for a very long time."[7]

The centre of the upper part of the 'Sulumunai nadi' is called 'the moon' and therefore the fluid that is secreted there in the process of 'yoga' is called by the saint 'the nectar of the moon'. It is obvious why he calls it 'the nectar of intellect'. His appeal to the Lord to enter into his body, mind, soul and intellect has already been cited. One of the four constituent elements of grace-experience already mentioned is explained here by the saint to a considerable extent. Two of them have been explained above. The other is to be explained later. In connection with these elements he mentions five spots where the nectar is being experienced by the evolving soul. They are:

7. Puranananthar, *Siva Yoga Saram.*

(1) the nectar available under the tongue, which is like the sweet spring-water,

(2) that available just above the inner tongue which has the sweetness of melted sugar candy,

(3) that available in the root of the nose, the sweetness of which will be like boiled sugar,

(4) that available in the centre of the forehead as sweet as well-boiled sugar, and

(5) that which is of enormous sweetness and of bright solid form.

Of these the fourth has been hitherto discussed. The first three kinds of nectar might have probably been attained by the saint in three successive stages of his realization of his own self. He himself has recorded, in a poem which appeals to the Lord to give him the sweet nectar by 'opening the door', that the Lord had already dissolved his stone-like mind and given him the nectar. This nectar might have been one of those three mentioned above. In the poem entitled, "The verse on Arutperunjyothi" he says that the Lord removed his sufferings by making the good nectar spring under the tongue. There is evidence in this poem to think that he mentions this instance in connection with his 'self-realization'.

For the fifth kind of nectar he has not specified any part of the body. We can infer by the order of his mention of these five kinds of nectar that the fifth kind is bound to be permeating throughout the body. This can also be inferred from the fact that while 'Siva Yoga Saram' says that the nectar of the forehead would enable one to live for a very long time, the saint says that the drinking of the fifth kind of nectar would make one attain embodied immortality. We may take it that the fourth nectar mentioned by the saint will bestow longevity and the fifth one felt throughout

the body will give embodied immortality. So much for the saint's attainment of the nectar. It should be borne in mind that coming in contact with the grace-Light and drinking the nectar are two aspects of Realization of God's grace experienced by the saint simultaneously.

Through his experience of the grace-Light the saint became virtually an embodiment of compassion and acquired the necessary 'supra-human' powers to fulfil his long-cherished wish. It is to be stressed that this experience metamorphosed his mind, intellect, soul and body in such a way that they became media for the Divine will to function in this world. Hence all these revelations and acquisition of supra-human powers. It can modestly be said that the term 'occult powers' does not and cannot exactly express what the saint acquired through becoming a medium for the Divine Will. He declared that all these deeds were the Lord's. He declared later that all his words were the Lord's.

Identification with God:

The most important factor of the experience of the grace-Light is the saint's feeling of his identification with the Lord. In the bliss consequent on this experience he sings that the Lord made him one with himself. He repeats this in the same song in another form:

"I become that".

In another poem he says that the Lord sublimated him into divinity.

This sentence seems to give a brief explanation to the famous sacred scriptural statement *Tat-tvam-asi*. He further sings in another song:

"It becomes myself; I become that. Thus I am in the 'Advaita' state."

In yet another song he says:

"My Lord, today you have shown yourself to be within me and me to be within you and thus removed my suffering and done me good."

In one of his poems he describes how the lord, merging in his body, bones, heart, love, compassion, soul and intellect makes the whole of him as Himself, thus becoming the sweetest experience for him. This amounts to the saint's losing the self-conscious state.

The fact that he frequently had the experience of union with the Lord both within and without is stated by himself, and his urge to expatiate on his four-fold experience of the Lord with his body, mind, soul and intellect brought out the utmost poetical skill in him and thus gushed out large streams of poetry, the sweetest in all Tamil literature.

One such stream is the poem entitled, "The wreath on grace-experience". In many of its stanzas it describes in nuptial terms his four-fold experience. The first stanza itself is an example in point. In that stanza he addresses God as the husband, who has permeated his mind, as his intellect, as his soul and as his sweet kinsman. Another long poem, 'Arutperunjyoti Akaval' also gives expression in detail to the states which his body spontaneously and instantaneously passed through while he experienced the Lord's grace-Light. Firstly, let us learn about his experience of the Lord through his senses.

We learn from the saint himself that he had physical union with the Lord and the bliss therof. It is definite that by this he does not mean his first experience of the grace-Light, but its development. His experience of the Light were perhaps so frequent that he began to feel the Lord's presence with all his senses also. This experience is indeed rare, and he is himself wonder-struck at this. He asks the Lord whether it was not enough for him that He had entered his mind and vouchsafed the nectar of grace.

Why is it that He also entered his body? Hence the saint's relations with the Lord as His Beloved proved to be true physically also. The Lord's sight was to him what the sight of a shade-giving tree is to a tired traveller. The bliss of the union with the Lord was not only like the sojourn under the tree but also like eating its ripe fruits, and drinking the sweet water of a running stream, thus gratifying his sense of taste as well as hunger. He felt in the Lord a sweet fragrance like that of a flower that has blossomed in the stream. The Lord's delicate touch was to him like the touch of a gentle breeze. The Lord was to him a very sweet solid piece of sugar which remained for ever undissolved on his tongue. He was like the nectar which never created distaste by satiation. During the embrace of the Lord he felt on His Divine Body the fragrance of camphor. In that Divine union the whole of his body underwent a process of radical change which involved the mellowing of his skin, the melting of the surrounding nerves and bones, the disentanglement of his muscles, the solidifying of the blood and semen, the blossoming of the brain and the pulsation of new flow of nectar throughout his body. These inner changes had their consequent outward counterparts such as perspiration in the forehead, a new glow on the face, tranquil breathing, a concealed smile, the hairs standing on end, a steady flow of tears, the mouth producing queer sounds, the ears becoming deaf, coolness all over the body, movement of the hands just as in salutation and movement of the legs just as in a circumambulating. Perhaps this radical change was the preliminary to the transfiguration of his body into a golden one. More of this later.

Let us now give one citation from the poem entitled 'The wreath on grace-experience' for substantiating his statement that he experienced the Lord with his mind. He addresses the Lord as the unique fruit of grace which ripened in the space beyond the 'divine one' with qualities unknown in worldly fruits and came within the reach of his mind, leaving behind a very sweet impression. It is

the bliss consequent on this experience that he indicates as 'the nectar of grace'.

As regards the intellectual side of his experience of the Lord we can cite his addressing the Lord as the 'Initiator-wakeful consciousness'. This belongs to the more essential type of consciousness, by means of which he had the perception of the grace-Light. He says that before getting this 'initiator-wakeful consciousness' he acquired one by one the other kinds of consciousness of this type, namely the 'initiator-waking consciousness', the 'initiator-dreaming consciousness', and the 'initiator-sleeping consciousness'. He says clearly that it was only when he awoke in the 'initiator-wakeful consciousness' that he got the Lord's union and thereby got the life of the 'Samarasa Sanmargam'. Hence the union of the Lord caused intellectual bliss for him, and he calls this bliss, the "unique nectar of wisdom". He elsewhere addresses the Lord as the fruit ripening more and more in his intellect producing there a sweet taste. The natural consequence was the increase of his wisdom. The chief import of his intellectual experience of the Lord's union is that he got his intellect completely metamorphosed into compassion through the Lord's grace and that in consequence of that development he became fully qualified to propagate the religion of grace or the religion of unique great compassion.

The bliss he enjoyed in this experience was the consequence of the realization of "Sivam", the Common Reality as permeating the 'space of grace'. This permeation he indicates as 'the dance in the Court of Intellect'. Coming in contact with the Lord who performs this 'dance' he felt as if he himself performed that dance. Such was his feeling of oneness (Advaita) with the Lord. He says that it is impossible to describe that state of the Lord, and that it is to be only realized through one's own experience. This is his soul's experience of the union with the Lord. He however gives expression to the bliss he enjoyed as the unique sweetness that was felt at the core of his soul.

The saint's realization of God's grace thus far studied accords completely with what he had been told inwardly by saint Gnanasambandar, his spiritual guide. He has recorded this information in one stanza of the poem dedicated to this saint. This stanza is so beautifully composed that it gives in a nut-shell what the realization of grace is. The meaning of the stanza is as follows:

> "The realization of grace is the Lord's transforming your 'self' into His own in the transcendent space and His revealing Himself for ever within your 'self' as the indestructible, self-luminous Reality, with the unique nature which can never be given expression to".

God-realization:

The foregoing study makes it clear that the saint realized God's grace in so far as he felt frequently the union of God with his body, mind, intellect and soul, having himself been equipped with a special set of consciousness. He wished to experience and thereby know the Lord, himself reaching still higher levels of consciousness. "Only those who have realized the grace," he says in the poem 'The verse on Arutperunjyoti' "can realize God." Though there is no end for higher levels of realizing the Lord, the Infinite, he wished his Lord would lift him up through the untraversed levels, 'spaces' as he would have them, and give him all the true wisdom in the realm of God-realization. It is to be noted here that when he wished thus, he had already attained a special, astral body which he calls 'the body of mantra' or 'the body of Pranava'. More about this attainment will be said later. Suffice it here to say that this attainment, which would seem great to an unrealized soul, was not a thing for the saint to feel contented with. Indeed he was not concerned with the attainment of astral bodies like this. He only yearned for the higher experience of the Lord and for the consequent true wisdom. Attainment would simply follow these.

Through his realization of grace he had already received the power of viewing things with perfect wisdom. Now,

he wished to have the perfect wisdom in full. He entreats the Lord to provide him with a 'great life' in which, with higher levels of consciousness he could come into uninterrupted contact with Him thereby acquiring the inestimable treasure of true wisdom. The immortality he got, as observed before, would be devoid of any content without great compassion towards all souls. This compassion, pure and great, should increase until it became the unique great compassion. This increase would be possible only through the contact the saint now wished to have with the Lord. This radiant contact is called by him *Arutperunjyoti*. Then the unique great compassion in its turn would lead to still deeper experience of the *Arutperunjyoti*. This cycle of the unique great compassion and the highest Realization is well indicated in the saint's most famous, oft-repeated, unique 'mantra':

> "*Arutperunjyoti Tanipperunkarunai*
> *Tanipperunkarunai Arutperunjyoti*"

The purport of the first line of this 'mantra', the live-wire of the saint's newly-founded universal religion, is that the experience of *Arutperunjyoti* makes the soul evolve with the unique great compassion. It is only on attaining this compassion that the soul, even though it had already attained immortality, could find a significance for its eternal life. A life with this great meaning could be called a great life. The saint calls this an 'Immortal Great Life'. It has been already indicated that he had made his immortal life meaningful through becoming an embodiment of compassion which transformation was effected in him by repeated experience of God's grace. Now he had evolved to such a stature that he could not be contented with the great compassion. He conceived of the unique great compassion and yearned for it. The Lord informed him inwardly that only the experience of the 'Supreme grace-Light' (Arutperunjyoti—the inner light of the grace-Light) would bring about this higher transformation. Hence he entreats the Lord to give him the Great Life.

Deliverance and attainment:

We have seen that through the experience of the Lord's grace-Light, he got himself relieved from his age-long connection with the source of ignorance, "Anava" as tradition would have it. This emancipation would not be complete if the roots of 'Anavam' were left untouched. These too should be removed. The saint describes these as 'the black sea of darkness'. He requests the Lord to help him cross that sea giving him the boat of the 'Supreme grace-Light'. He entreats Him to give him there the nectar of this superior form of grace. He calls this crossing of the sea as deliverance and the drinking of this nectar of his soul-experience with the all-embracing, all-powerful, all-permeating Lord as attainment.

According to the saint the process of training to get rid of ignorance and ego is styled as deliverance. This training is intended for stabilizing the path of the soul on its onward march. But redemption means the accumulated experience in all stages up to the embodied immortal life. The significant term he uses to indicate the higher attainment is the 'Supreme grace-Light'. Another significant term of his to indicate this is 'The Dance in the Golden dais'. By saying that he has attained the Dance in the Golden dais he means the eternal life of the soul experiencing the bliss of union with the Lord, transcending of all 'spaces' and equipping itself with the highest consciousness possible, namely 'that which is beyond the God-wakeful state' (Siva-duriyam). We may recall here that he described his experience of the grace-Light as 'the Dance in the dais of the Intellect'. He experienced the union with the grace-Light to such an extent that he felt himself as performing 'the Dance in the dais of the intellect'. Now he wished to have a similar union with the 'Supreme grace-Light'. He entreats the Lord to enable him to see His Holy Feet, to sing in praise of it with abiding love, to become love-embodied both physically and spiritually and to dance in divine mirth. We may again recall here that in his 'self-realization' he got the initiation into spiritual realms

performed for him by the Lord himself by placing His Holy Feet on his head. In his Realization of the Grace he felt himself one with the Holy Feet. Now he expresses in soul-stirring poems his ardent wish to be ever in union with Them. One of these poems is specially noteworthy, for it records the fact that he took refuge in the Lord in order to have this eternal experience. One of the stanzas of the poem runs as follows:

> "O my king, my Lord, my mother, my father, all in one, you removed all the inner veils, thereby bringing me to the perception of things unknown to me so far and gave me the great experience in the 'great intellectual space of Grace' which caused me bliss. I take refuge in you".

In another stanza of the same poem he states that he takes refuge in the Lord who fulfilled all his wishes by granting him the 'all-performing power' through the experience of His Grace. One cannot but feel awe and reverence that even after achieving the union of the Lord so intensely as to feel himself one with Him and thereby attaining very rare superhuman powers, the saint could conceive of still higher levels of experience of the Infinite, feeling that what he had attained was only partial deliverance from the 'ever-accompanying source of ignorance' (Anavam). He not only conceived of them, but also realized them. The more striking factor of his experience is that he has recorded it in detail.

The highest experience:

Now for his impressions of this experience. We have seen in the foregoing study that he rose to the 'space' called 'divining space' and attained powers like those of creation, protection and destruction of delusive forms. In his highest experience he attained to the perception of the 'Supreme grace-Light' before which the grace-Light he had realized in the 'divining space' was like a mere atom. When he perceived there was enormous Light. It entered into his

heart and stayed there. Hence he indicates that Light as the Light within the Inner Light. Here the first inner light is the grace-Light. He became united with it heart and soul, enjoying the inexpressible but true, perfect, supreme bliss. Though he says that he looked on the Supreme with his 'eyes' it is not the ordinary eye that he refers to. It is not the mind's eye either. It is the consciousness that is more subtle than the one which is known as 'God-wakeful consciousness'. It is with this consciousness that he perceived the Lord whom even pure 'yogis' who are ever in the wakeful consciousness (Duriyam) are unable to perceive. By this it is clear that he had attained to that which he elsewhere describes as attainable only after deliverance from the ego.

There were, of course, preliminary stages of consciousness he passed through before arriving finally at this consciousness. He describes them in one stanza of his poem entitled "The wreath on experience". According to his habit of dedicating at least one long poem to express each of his significant experiences and attainments, the saint reserves this poem for representing in terms of nuptial love his highest experience of the Supreme. The preliminary stages of consciousness belong to the same set. They are, 1) God-waking consciousness, 2) God-dreaming consciousness, 3) God-sleeping consciousness and 4) God-wakeful consciousness (See Appendix No. 6). In a few of the stanzas of the said poem he beautifully sets forth some of his preliminary experiences. In the first he says that most of the time he remains wakeful. All this time the Lord is in communion with him and makes him unconscious of the ever-moving cycle of nights and days. This state of his is what we are to understand as his experience with God-wakeful consciousness. In the same stanza, he accepts that sometimes he falls asleep but even then he dreams of the Lord's union. This state can be called the 'God-dreaming state'.

In another stanza of the poem he himself indicates that the moment when he embraces the Lord's shoulders should

be known as 'God-waking consciousness' and this should not be confounded with 'Divine-waking consciousness,' since the latter is included in the former. Here we can remark that this 'Divine-waking consciousness' relates to the stage of 'self-realization'. Then he proceeds to say that his being in the state of union with the Lord should be known as 'God-wakeful consciousness' which transcends the dreaming and sleeping consciousness of the same type. It can be stated as relating to the stage of the realization of God's grace. He continues in the next stanza that his enjoyment of his union with the Lord should be known as a unique consciousness which transcends even the 'wakeful' kind. In one of the later stanzas he indicates this final state of consciousness as "Siva-duriyadeetam".

From these references we learn that the saint attained the highest possible state of God-experience in which he felt both his soul's horizon and physical being completely filled with the infinite. We have seen already how he had been freed from the source of ignorance (Anavam) and consequently from the sense of ego. Now through this higher experience he was relieved of the roots of 'Anavam'. He lost even the sense of existence of his 'self'. His subtle body was nowhere to be felt. "The consequent bliss", he later on remarked "was beyond expression". He had to rest contented with saying that the very remembrance of that blissful experience caused him enormous bliss enjoying which he forgot himself. In another poem he says that when he had this experience he could not know whether it was the Lord who merged with him or it was he who merged with the Lord. The result was that both of them were one.

One of the special features is the realization of the soul while it is still in union with the Lord, of His Individuality. The other special feature is the soul's experiencing both the common and the above special feature at the same time—as concurrent features. The spiritual bliss the saint enjoyed in this highest experience was accompanied by a bodily bliss also. He signifies this, as usual, as the

divine nectar. He says that on drinking this nectar he became an embodiment of Infinite bliss. He enjoyed this bliss all the time without falling asleep even during nights. He says that by God's grace sleep left him once for all. This state is what he calls the 'Siva-duriyam' (God-wakeful) consciousness. In the next few stanzas he pictures his state of union with the Lord in which he and the Lord become 'one'. This union is what he calls the 'Siva-duriyadeetam' (beyond God-wakeful consciousness). It is the life provided with this consciousness that he calls 'the great life'. The saint says in figurative terms as if speaking to a companion, that he could only come into communion with the Lord but he could not speak about His nature, for He transcends all concepts. He elsewhere indicates this transcendent state as the state of 'Suddha Sanmargam', which is beyond all qualities, forms, and features. It doubtless means the universal religion which guides the people to worship and realize the Lord in His transcendent state, without whiling away their time and energy in the meaningless differences of nature, form, feature, race, caste and family. We can easily see that it is his experience of the Lord in this state that made him an embodiment of unique great compassion and thereby made him rise up before the mass and propagate the universal religion.

It can be learnt from the poem that in the saint's life his experience of the Supreme grace-Light recurred many a time. His poem, "The verse on Arutperunjyoti" also mentions many kinds of nectars the first of which is the nectar of grace. These can be taken to indicate recurrences of the experience of the Supreme grace-Light each of which might have been more profound than the previous one. This becomes clear from the fact that the saint after saying that the Lord came into communion with him expresses his expectation of his subsequent arrival. This fact is corroborated by the saint's reference in this regard to many 'spaces', one above the other, or one including the other. He gives names to the first five, and mentions the sixth with an indirect name. Then he proceeds to say that there are

'spaces' even beyond the sixth which are totally inexplicable and hence are called "void" and "intensive void". He calls all these with a common name. The very fact that all these 'spaces' relate to God-realization and each of them is included in the next "space" shows clearly that even though the individuality of God-realization is felt to some extent and expressed in mystical language, experience of the Lord will go on extending to ever new levels, making the experiencing soul enjoy for ever the natural, true, intellectual bliss, and in consequence of this experience, to become omnipresent like the Lord and to come to possess a tenement of wisdom and to wield in no time, very high powers quite unimaginable for an ordinary mortal. "If the realized souls are asked to describe their experience of the graceful presence of the Supreme Lord, the one natural, ultimate Reality", the saint remarks, "they would simply keep quiet, shedding blissful tears with their eyes full of Great Compassion". The saint was one of these exalted souls. He mentions his own dumbfounded state regarding his higher experience.

The very thought of the Lord's 'arrival' was as sweet to the saint everytime as a dish of milk, ghee, honey and sugar and it increased moment by moment and at last 'devoured him'. He says in one of his poems that the arrival of the Lord was announced by a Divine sound and that as He approached His fragrance filled the whole atmosphere. This indicates the readiness of his 'special' consciousness to perceive the Lord. "When the Lord came within his reach and took him in union with Himself he was filled with stabilizing infinite bliss. This union, unlike the experience of the grace, is called by the saint 'inward union'. He holds his realization of the grace as his outward union with the Lord. This former realization made him attain the immortal, effulgent body whereas the 'inward union' made him bliss-embodied, the nature of which is beyond expression.

We learnt that his 'sonship' to the Lord took deep roots through his experience of His Grace. But through the steps of the higher experience he felt love-relations with

his Lord and finally he came to know no difference between his Lord and himself, i.e., he felt himself ever one with his Lord. He found no difference between the unique great compassion engendered in him, and his perception of the Supreme Grace-Light. He did not feel himself at all. Hence he gave a new form to his unique 'mantra' as follows:

> "*Arutperunjyoti Arutperunjyoti*
> *Arutperunjyoti Arutperunjyoti.*"

This means the realization of the existence of Supreme Grace-Light all over. In other words it means the direct perception of, and coming into communion with the omnipresent, Supreme Grace-Light. It may be taken that this experience is indicated by the saint as the 'Great blissful space'. This is the final point of the highest experiences whereas the previous form of the mantra noted before is the first and guiding point.

Reference to Gnasambandar:

The saint's God-realization described hitherto is found in a nut-shell in a poem dedicated by him to saint Gnanasambandar. Its stanzas relating to his previous experiences were cited and explained in the appropriate places. The stanza relating to God-Realization beautifully brings out its salient points. The meaning of the stanza is as follows:—

"My highest and pure guide, you have made me know that God-realization is the experience of the Omnipresent in the endless 'spaces' beyond the 'divining space'. Spiritual experiences would first reveal Him as immanent in all that is created, and as the inner Light of the soul experiencing which the soul would feel itself in possession of the Inner Light. Then in the higher 'space', the soul would experience the Lord so intensely that it would feel one with Him. In still higher 'space' it would lose once for all its individuality (or

identity) and feel itself in the Lord. In the 'space' that is even beyond that He would seem as all these experiences put together. Beyond that space there would be nothing but the Lord. God-realization, without coming to an end here, would extend further and further to realize the One without feeling the realization—that is the realization of 'the Zero' or the meaningful void."

9. SUPERNAL POWERS AND EMBODIED IMMORTALITY

Attainment of all-performing power :

We learnt in the previous chapter that the all-performing power was attained by the saint as a result of his realization of God's grace. This power is one of the basic aspects of grace-experience, the experience of coming into communion with the Inner Light. "When the self is in communion with a higher power, Nature automatically obeys, without stress and strain, the will of man. This effortless command over Nature is called 'miraculous' by the uncomprehending materialist", writes Swami Yogananda in his autobiography. "The law of miracles is operable by any man who has realized that the essence of creation is light" he writes elsewhere in his book. Exactly in conformity with these statements of an Indian Yogi of very recent times, the saint attained supernal powers as a result of his realizing the Grace-Light.

The article on 'miracles' in the Encyclopaedia Britannica says:

> "Although the possibility of miracles is often confidently denied, such denial rests on an unproved assumption; since we do not know the continuity of nature so thoroughly as to be able to declare this or that even is necessarily an interruption of it."

It further indicates that a divine initiative is assumed

in the recognition of the possibility of miracles. Accordingly the saint declares that he felt within himself the presence of God in the form of inner Light and that He gave him the powers to perform great wonders in the world. This declaration makes it clear that his attainment of such powers was a constituent of the revelation he had.

The "probability of miracles," continues the article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "depends on the conception we have of the free relation of God to nature, and of nature as the adequate organ for the fulfilment of God's purposes. If we believe in divine revelation and redemption transcending the course of nature, miracles as signs of that divine purpose will not seem improbable". The saint gives a vivid description in his poem entitled, "The wreath on grace experience" of his conception of the free relation of God to nature and of nature as the adequate organ for the fulfilment of God's purposes. He says that God is immanent in the five great elements, that is nature, and makes them to act and react, and that at the same time He is above nature and controls it.

The fact that the all-performing power is a constituent of his revelation is further explained by the saint who says that he felt himself in possession of high powers when he had a profound experience of the Lord's grace-Light during a certain night-time. He signifies this coming off of a new possession as 'the Lord giving a certain thing in his hand'. He indicates elsewhere that 'the thing the Lord gave him' was an attainment capable of wielding miraculous powers. This is the first occasion of his grace-experience that he felt these powers. On subsequent occasions of the same experience, synchronising with the active period in his life which marked him out as a great humanist of divine order doing compassionate service to the lives around him including human lives, he continued to receive higher occult powers. Compassion and higher experience of grace-Light grew in him, each helping the other. The experience of attunement with the Lord's will brought with it the neces-

sary powers he prayed for, in order to enable him to render service to all souls in all worlds. "Innocent of all personal motives, and employing the creative Will bestowed on him by the Creator, he rearranged the light-atom of the universe" to create anew anything he liked, to preserve in its form anything he liked and to destroy anything that caused suffering to the souls. He thus got bestowed on him the three famous powers of creation, preservation, and destruction of delusive forms for rest—powers normally possessed only by divine forces. He says that sometimes his supernal powers surpassed even those of the divine forces referred to and he was empowered to perform along with the three acts referred to, the acts of veiling and blessing with grace.

Since treatises on Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy attribute these five acts only to the Lord, one cannot help wondering at the statements of the saint regarding his attainment or the necessary powers to do these himself. But, "the feeling is the deeper source of religion", as believed by William James, "and philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue".[1] "What religion reports" he continues elsewhere "always purports to be a fact of experience: the divine is actually present, religion says, and between it and ourselves relations of give and take are actual. If definite perceptions of fact like this cannot stand upon their own feet surely abstract reasoning cannot give them the support they are in need of. Conceptual processes can class facts, define them, interpret them; but they do not produce them, nor can they reproduce their individuality. There is always a "plus, a thisness", which feeling alone can answer for. Philosophy in this sphere is thus a secondary function, unable to warrant faith's veracity...." The saint's direct experience of the unseen and his feeling of attaining certain powers corroborate what William James has expressed in his passage. So we need not try to substantiate that ex-

1. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, page 422.

perience with the formulas laid down by any school of philosophy. James in all sincerity concludes, "that the attempt to demonstrate by purely intellectual processes the truth of the deliverances of direct religious experience is absolutely hopeless."

The saint did not use for any selfish design these enormous powers he feels to have attained through the Lord's grace. He did not cherish any selfish desire at all. This is clearly disclosed by him in his famous poem, 'An intense appeal from the son of God', his intercession to the Lord to give him the power and strength to serve all in their sufferings. His earnest prayers were granted and even while he wielded the "miraculous powers" as exemplified in the many stories about his wonder-workings, his whole aim was directed towards the Lord. It is only because his experience of the Lord in the form of effulgent Light enabled him to become 'an embodiment of compassion' that he called the Lord the 'Grace-Light'. How could it be within the possibility of such a compassionate soul to cherish any selfish wish. He says that he does not feign to have attained these powers out of an instinct for self-praise but that he really got them out of his devotion to the Lord. The worldly had no attraction for him. The only thing he wished for was to hallow the name of the Lord through service to all souls. He sincerely wished all humanity to get rid of all sorts of violence, to follow the path of love and to live happily for ever. He wished to render his service to human beings in making them understand and realize the grace of the Lord. Hence when he was empowered to perform anything he liked, he construed that he was to rule the world with the grace-Light. He gives various descriptions of different stages of this experience.

(1) He says in one poem that the Lord assured him authoritatively that he would give him the 'lady of grace-attainment' in marriage within one hour.

In another poem he says that the Lord kept his promise.

(2) In the poem entitled, "The verse on Arutperunjyoti' he states that the Lord, his Father, crowned him as the king of the kingdom of grace which knows no end.

(3) In the same poem he declares that the Lord gave him the sceptre of Grace and ordained that he should rule the world.

The last two show both the vastness of his ambition for compassionate service and the enormity of the supernal powers he attained in order to fulfil his ambition. The fact that he rendered prolonged and intensive service to humanity is deduced from his mention at the time of his God-realization that the Lord gave him the sceptre of the Supreme Grace-Light which would never perish. What are the supernal powers he attained?

It is learnt from his works that he was bestowed with three categories of supernal powers. They are, 1) powers of action (Karma-siddhi), 2) powers of attunement through concentration (Yoga siddhi), and 3) powers of wisdom (Gnana siddhi).

Powers of action :

One of these powers of action is to get one's capability extended to reach everything eternal everywhere. There are instances in the saint's recorded life-histories which relate his simultaneous appearance in two places. One of them can be related here:

At the time of the completion of the 'Hall of wisdom for the universal worship' at Vadalur, a long post was required to be used as the flag-staff. The saint sent the contractor to Madras to purchase it. He went and returned complaining that the price was too high. The saint asked him to go again, telling him that he would follow. When the contractor reached the timber merchant at Madras he

saw to his surprise the saint standing on the very post for which he had bargained some days back. After the purchase was over the saint asked him to send the post to Vadalur and go there. On his arrival at the hermitage at Mettukkuppam the contractor found the saint there. When he told the devotees there about the day and time of the saint's presence at Madras they stated that on that very day and at that very time he was delivering lectures at Mettukkuppam.

The saint's powers of going anywhere in the universe and of transmigration are referred to by himself in one of his poems.

Powers of Concentration:

As for powers of concentration, the saint relates in a poem entitled 'Inexhaustible Bliss' that his powers of concentration are really inexhaustible. To illustrate, the dismemberment of his body and the re-union of the dismembered parts may be cited:

"One day about noon, the Swamiji went out of the Dharmasala and did not turn up for an unusually long time. One, Vellore Shanmugam Pillay, growing impatient of the Swamiji's absence, went out in search of him and was shocked at the gruesome sight of his body dismembered and cast scattered in an out-of-the-way locality. The Swamiji immediately put in his appearance before him and warned him not to disturb him any more like that in future."

The other illustrations may be his subjugation of water and fire, his feeding a large number of guests at the 'Sanctuary for eternal service' with an incredibly small quantity of food, his turning mercury into a bead, his walking on prickly pear and picking of live charcoal and his demonstrations in Alchemy. These are narrated in the saint's life-history written by T. V. Govindarajulu Chetty.[2] Without

2. T.V. Govindarajulu Chetty, *Sri Chidambaram Ramalingaswami: His life, mission and studies*, 1935, pages 40-41.

the above-quoted internal evidence of the saint that his powers of concentration were really inexhaustible, these instances may seem mere concoctions.

Describing the powers of the saints who attained transfigured bodies, the saint says that they are capable of seeing from their place anything anywhere in the universe. That is, their sight is not obstructed by space and the objects in space. An incident related in his life-histories in connection with the construction of the Hall of Wisdom for universal worship at Vadalur shows that the saint possessed this power. It is said that after giving instructions for the construction of the hall, he retired to his hermitage at Mettukkuppam. He did not turn up till after the construction was nearly over. When the supervisors went to Mettukkuppam he pointed out certain errors in the building and had them corrected. It is to be inferred that, remaining in the hermitage itself, he had been capable of seeing the building at Vadalur.

Powers of Wisdom:

As for powers of wisdom, the saint reiterates in many of his poems that he was capable of raising the dead as well as living an eternal life. He styles this highest, distinct gift as due to the powers of wisdom, otherwise known as the 'eye of wisdom' in his own words.

Let us first study his references to his ability to raise the dead.

He mentions that a perfect saint who has got his spiritual eye (temple in the forehead) opened will be able to raise the dead by a mere glance. This is affirmed in his poems also. There he says that those who have seen the Lord's Grace-Light, having themselves been lifted to the wakeful consciousness (probably the Initiator-wakeful consciousness) will raise the dead by a glance. He explains further that this fact is possible to those who come into

communion with the Lord who is Omnipotent. Even though it is surprising to hear the saint say that the dead may be raised again, great souls like Jesus Christ rose again after their death. Jesus in his revelation speaks about resurrection. *Periyapuranam,* the work on the life histories of Tamil saints and devotees, records instances in the lives of saint Gnanasambandar, saint Tirunavukkarasar and saint Sundarar of their raising the dead. Of these, the first gave life to a heap of bones and made a girl emerge out of them. The second gave life to a corpse and the third brought back a teen-aged lad whom a crocodile had swallowed days before. The *Ramayanam* mentions a similar instance. There the touch of Rama transformed a stone-image into a lady who had been cursed by her husband, a seer, to become a stone. Mythology preserves in its fold many similar instances. The saint's recent testimony makes us re-think the truth underlying this feat which has been, for long, shrouded in mystery, and has entered into the folds of mythology.

A record of a more recent instance of raising the dead is found in the *Autobiography of a Yogi* written by Swami Yogananda. This book relates an incident of Sri Lahiri Mahasaya raising a dead man. Therefore, this rare power cannot be ignored as mere myth. The saint repeatedly mentions in his poems that the Lord bestowed on him the power of raising the dead. Since he avows emphatically that this power is rendered possible by his experience of the Supreme Grace-Light, and since it is very clear that he had the experience of the Supreme Grace-Light, one cannot ignore as mere fancy his statement of his attainment of this rare gift. Of course, there is no instance, among the miracles related in his life histories, of his raising the dead. But it is proper to take his own words as more authoritative than the stories about him, because many such rare events of his life might have been lost without authentic record. The power of raising the dead was one of the boons he asked for. It is quite possible, as proved by his own words, that he was granted such power. Out of sheer sympathy for those who die a premature death he entreat-

ed the Lord to give him the power to raise them again and to make them His devotees. Statements found in his poems affirm that he did get that power.

Velayuda Mudaliar, the chief disciple of the saint, writes in an article which was published in 1882 in a magazine named *The Madras Theosophist* that the saint while he was at Madras was gifted to convert by a mere glance a non-vegetarian into a vegetarian. This power was found in him even before he had the higher experiences of God. Therefore it will not be wrong to hold that after he attained God-realization he was probably able to convert atheists and followers of various religions into followers of his universal religion. He might have done this with 'his glance which was imbued with the highest wisdom' and the fullest compassion. Hence he states in one of his poems that he got the 'glance of wisdom which could raise the dead'. His statement that those who come and worship at Vadalur would see wonders like the rising of the dead and that Vadalur is capable of raising the dead may be taken to signify that an ardent devotee of Vadalur would 'regain his life' which would have otherwise 'been lost'. Regaining one's own life would be possible only when one follows the path of the 'pure universal religion', which the temple at Vadalur stands for.

There is a close link through all the three kinds of powers described hitherto. Let us see how. The eight powers of action give rise to the powers of attunement through concentration. It is obvious that concentration is possible only through practice. The combined effect of these two sets of powers gives birth to the powers of wisdom.

Embodied immortality:

There are three stages in the attainment of embodied immortality. One is the transfiguration of the physical tenement into that of purity. Another is the transfiguration of the body into that of gold and Light. The final one is the transfiguration of this body into that of wisdom.

This gradual transfiguration of the bodies signifies the embodied immortality attained and expounded by the saint. Let us now study in detail this highest attainment of his.

He distinguishes this department of getting direct instruction, inspiration, and experience from God in the course of attaining embodied immortality as 'the art of deathlessness'.

Saint Tirumoolar, whom the saint holds in high esteem as the author of the best treatise on spiritualism, deals with the subject in a detailed manner. He refutes emphatically the existence of the God of Death in the case of aspirants for communion with the Lord. He includes among such the 'Yogis' who ultimately stop breathing through steady practice. He says that the Lord immanent in their soul will not get out of their bodies.

Saint Gnanasambandar whom the saint holds to be his spiritual guide mentions deathlessness in his hymns. He says that the God of Death will not approach those who worship God with abiding love. In two of his hymns he makes it clear that those who defy death will not be born again. Saint Tirunavukkarasar says that the God of Death will seize only sinners and not devotees whom the Lord gathers. Saint Sundarar says that the Lord enabled him to defy death and birth respectively. Saint Arunagiriyar, whom the saint holds as one of the great souls who remain saved for ever, says emphatically that since the spear of Lord Muruga is there for his help there is no death (a calamity for others) for him.

The saint makes in the 2nd book of the Arutpa a general mention of the previous devotees who attained deathlessness. He makes a special mention of Saint Manickavasakar's gradual attainment of the bodies of love, grace and bliss respectively which signify embodied immortality. In the same poem he speaks of the saint as one who attained to higher spiritual realms. Saint Manickavasakar him-

self reveals that the Lord gave him the body of bliss and made him live for ever enjoying the bliss like an elephant enjoying sugarcane and fruits. He also points out that the Lord effected this transfiguration of his physical body with His grace. In order to express the idea that the change his body underwent was radical, he symbolises the Lord's grace as the great fire and says that the physical bodies of all the devotees—including him—who gathered round the Lord were surrounded by the great fire of His Grace. This signifies that their physical bodies, consequent on their great experience of the Lord's grace-Light, were transfigured into those of bliss. What saint Manickavasakar indicates by the term 'the great fire of grace' the saint signifies as 'the grace-Light'. He says that the Lord gave Himself to him and thereby transfigured his body in the alchemy of grace. This shows the similarity of the experience of both the saints.

The saint does not mean by 'deathlessness' the permanence of the physical body. He had known the meanness and the fleeting nature of this body right from the beginning of his spiritual career; that is, from the incident of Lord Muruga's vision which occurred in his ninth year. He sings about the fleeting nature of the body in one full poem in the 2nd book. He indicates often very clearly that his body of flesh was transfigured into that of light. If he had wished the longevity of his physical body he would not have entreated the Lord from the very beginning to cut asunder the chain of his birth which caused him sufferings. After attaining what he entreated for he sings that the Lord gave him the path which would avoid his further births. His ultimate aim was to defy birth, which, according to his precepts, writings and life, is to be preceded by deathlessness through gradual transfiguration of the fleshy body into those of purity, light and wisdom. The important implication of this attainment is the complete invisibility of the fleshy body. That is, those who attain embodied immortality will be able to hide themselves from the sight of the people without leaving away their physical tenement. Their attainment includes the salvation of

both their body and soul. The saint clearly removes the possible doubt about this sort of salvation by saying that the Lord of the Supreme Grace-Light rooted out the doubt regarding his body, the doubt whether the body would lie dead or would be transfigured so that it might be co-ordinated with the inhabiting soul in experiencing the higher realization and ultimately get saved from disintegration and death.

Though this may seem unbelievable there are indications in the lives of great saints of antiquity for its probability. The life of saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar found in *Periyapuranam* bears evidence for the transfiguration of the physical body. It is recorded that she was given by the Lord a ghost's body as required by her. As there is no indication of her shedding her fleshy body, we may understand that her body was transfigured into a bony one. We are further informed that the Lord granted her request that she should be near His Holy feet while He danced. Saint Gnanasambandar is learnt to have entered into the Great Light that appeared on the occasion of his marriage. Saint Tirunavukkarasar is not known to have left behind his physical coil. The *Periyapuranam* records that he got the body of wisdom. He himself declares that the body of the evolved soul will never be separated and left behind. Saint Sundarar is said to have mounted an elephant sent by the Lord and reached Him.

The deliverance that these saints attained may be classed as 'embodied immortality'. Saint Thayumanavar enumerates three kinds of attainments of which this embodied immortality is one. Distinguishing those who had obtained God's Grace from those who had not, he says that the latter's bodies will lie dead according to the natural law that, 'the created would perish', whereas the former's will not die and cause them to be reborn. The bliss enjoyed by the souls in this 'birth-and-deathless' state is ineffable. But what would happen to their corporal frame? He answers this question elsewhere in the form of another

question. He asks the Lord whether the bodies of the devotees whose souls merged in the space of Grace were transfigured into Light. The question obviously implies an answer in the affirmative.

In the chapter on the saint's experience, his frequent states of merger with the Lord were described. As an accrued result of those experiences, and in conformity with the statement of Thayumanavar, the saint had his body dissolved and changed into that of light and finally into that of Wisdom. It is this final transfiguration that is signified by the last incident recorded in his life-histories viz., shutting himself up in the inner apartment of his hermitage at Mettukkuppam. Quite unable to conceive of the real state of affairs, the ill-informed laymen concocted all sorts of stories about his disappearance. None of these stories has anything in conformity with his experience.

Now of the process of transfiguration.

The saint refers to his embodied immortality as having three different aspects. They are: (1) the eternal head (2) the eternal air and (3) the eternal water. A stanza of one of his poems embodies all these three aspects in order as trinity of the art of immortality. It says that the Lord showed the saint the eternal head, and then the eternal air which knows no hindrance, thereby making him fully deserving the transfiguration of body. Then with the eternal water that drieth not He made him get the universal, eternal state of life which is not within the reach of even the pure-bodied saints. Let us try to understand, with the help of all his references to these three terms, what exactly they mean.

In the art of immortal life, 'to show the eternal head' is the first step enabling the soul to evolve. It may be associated with the 'Living experience' of the soul (self-realization). Hence we may quote here the information we learnt from him at the time of his self-realization. He

says in the poem 'Anbu-malai" that the Lord showed him the state of immortality. We have also seen that he says in the same poem that he was formerly ignorant of the art of immortality. Therefore 'showing the eternal head', the initiation into the art of immortality may be held to have been performed to him by the Lord at the wake of his realization of his own self.

What does the term 'eternal head' denote? The clue to find this out is given by the saint in two significant poems, entitled: 'The wreath on grace-experience' and 'Greatness of the Holy Feet'. The latter speaks of the two sets of the five elements, i.e., the ordinary five elements, namely earth, water, fire, air and ether and the sublimated earth, etc. The former speaks of the sublimated ones with terms similar to those of the trinity of the art of immortality. It mentions the Lord as the fire that blazes without any noise among the air that knows no hindrance, and as the unbroken earth which stands in the water that drieth not and as the thing ineffable that stands in the great 'mantra'. In this poem the references of the first four elements are clear. The fact that the last element, namely, 'the ether', is mentioned here as 'the ineffable thing' may be inferred from a reference in the *Tirumantiram* of Tirumoolar. Now it is clear that not only the term 'eternal head' but also the others of the trinity of the art of immortality denote the sublimated elements, the earth, the air and the water respectively. Now a question may arise as to why the saint mentions these three alone while all the five elements get sublimated. The answer is this: Of the five elements, 'earth', 'water', and 'air' are the forms of matter. These alone undergo changes. The other two, 'fire' and 'ether' (the electro-magnetic wave) are the forms of energy. Both matter and energy are transmutable. So it is scientific to refer to energy in terms of matter, and matter in terms of energy. Hence the saint explains the three aspects of higher matter (sublimated ones) with reference to the two kinds of energies.

It goes without saying that the physical body is constituted of the five elements. Hence the transformation of the elements spoken of by the saint should be taken as the changes undergone by his body. What is the change in his body undergone at the initiation, i.e., 'the Lord showing the eternal head?' The saint himself speaks of this change in one of his poems. That poem is a request to the Lord to give him the three forms beginning with 'the form of purity'. These forms are nothing but the bodies of purity, of light, and of wisdom. It says that the Lord had already made his shrinkable body into a blooming one. Elsewhere he says that his shrunken body became a golden one. Therefore the change of the body into a blooming one may be taken as the first stage in the art of immortality. It may be this change that is referred by the saint in the phrase, 'the Lord showing the eternal head'. This is the conquest over the natural process of aging. 'Even the old can become young', says the saint when he exhorts the people to follow his path of 'Samarasa-Sanmargam'.

The second aspect of the trinity is the eternal air. The saint refers to this as one that knows no hindrance and as one which does not cause burning. He refers elsewhere to this burning as inner burning. Even though we learnt above that he signifies by the phrase, 'eternal air', the transformed air, it is not enough to bring out its full significance in the art of immortality. We have got a fairly large number of references in his poems which go a long way in helping us know its full significance. The *Tirumantiram* of Tirumoolar also helps us in this regard. It speaks of the stoppage of the ordinary course of respiration and of the commencement of cutaneous respiration of the higher order. It further says that those who switch over to this kind of respiration will not get exhausted and will not die. It indicates the power of the inexhaustible as well as the unburnable air in set terms. Poetess Avvaiyar makes it clear that the air which is being wasted both through the nostrils and the pores of the body must be preserved by stopping both the pulmonary and cellular respiration. The

saint also seems to imply this meaning in the term 'vekakkal' (the air that burneth not). By the complete stoppage of normal respiration, the secret source of power begins to function by the grace of God. Higher biologists write on the possibility of oxygen being produced within the body itself.[3] The significance of this term consists in turning the ordinary breath into a higher one in order to attain eternal life.

The saint's poems enlighten us further on the same point. Demanding eternal body from the Lord, he states in a poem that he has already been enthroned on a golden dais, having been given a 'hand' at first and then two inexhaustible 'feet' to eternalise him. What exactly does he mean by the 'two inexhaustible feet?' One of the two feet is stated by him to be the light that reveals the whole universe; the other, the state of experience of real bliss. The state of light is again explained in the same poem as the two aspects of the same point. One of them is the light shed by 'Omkara'; there is another light within it. These are styled as the feet of the Lord. In another stanza these are again stated to be capable of giving kindness and bliss respectively. Bliss and kindness are mutually supplementing. One of the divine feet is represented in another stanza as a boat to cross the ocean of 'ignorance due to attachment' and the other as the companion giving bliss in silence. In other words, one is the light enabling the eye to see, and the other, the very motive-force behind it. The connection between the eternal air and the divine feet is not far to seek. Only on the contact between the divine feet and the soul 'the unregulated breath is turned into regulated one.' Since this transformation was effected in him by the touch of the divine Feet the saint speaks of them in detail.

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3. Calalases represent a specific type of hemin containing hydroperoxidases which have the property of very rapidly catalyzing the decomposition of H_2O_2: $2H_2O_2$ $2H_2O+O_2$. (West). and Todd, *Text Book of Bio-Chemistry*, 3rd edn., 1961; page 860.

The third aspect of the trinity is 'the water that drieth not'. It is this that enabled his body to be transfigured into that of purity, of light, and of wisdom.

What does the term, 'the water that drieth not' mean? It can be generally said to mean the transformed water. But this is not enough to explain the transfiguration of the physical body of the saint. This term signifies that the wonderful existence of life in tune with the body equipped with nine gates is expressed in terms of his own experience. There are many evidences in the poems sung by him at the time of his 'grace-experience' for taking this term to denote the 'nectar of the moon' spoken of at length in the chapter on his experience. He refers in more than four poems to this nectar as the nectar of grace eternalising the body. Therefore it is clear that the nectar mentioned above may be regarded as 'the water that drieth not'. The saint says that with the help of 'the water that drieth not' he attained gradually the bodies of purity, light and wisdom. This shows the recurrence of the gift of the nectar.

In one of his essays on 'Compassionate service' he describes briefly the actual change of the physical body. He says that the body which is the manifestation of the impure elements like the skin, nerves, bones, muscles, blood and semen is changed into a body which is the manifestation of pure elements. This statement explains the name, 'the body of purity.' It is constituted of the manifestations of the sublimated elements i.e., pure ones. He calls this body the golden body the purity of which is immeasurable. He proceeds further to say that this body may further change into a body of pure elements. This one is the causal body of the former. This is elsewhere called by him 'the body of light' or the body of 'pranavam'. He explains that this will appear like gold but will not be touched by others. He continues that this body may again be changed into that of wisdom which will never be seen by others. This body will not in any way be affected by the ordinary five elements. It will not only

move on the earth but also on the sky. Those who have attained this body of wisdom will perform all wonders like 'atma-siddhi'. They will even control the energies which are responsible for the creation and conduct of the world. They are all-powerful. Their deeds are completely in conformity with God's Will. All their experiences are God-experiences. They are eternal. Thus goes his description of the body of wisdom. This makes it clear that the accessions of miraculous powers described in the first part of this chapter are the invariable adjuncts of the attainment of the bodies of purity, light and wisdom, among which only the last, according to the saint, is eternal.

Dr. K. Srinivasan quoting briefly the saint's explanation of the transfiguration of the physical body, writes that it does not lie within human capacity to effect this change scientifically in the laboratories and that, as the saint himself says, only God's grace in its full-fledged state can do this. The saint's attainment of these bodies reminds us of Saint Tirunavukkarasar's getting his body first transfigured into that of Light. Poet Sekkizhar describes that body as one that is immune to decay. When the saint walked with his transfigured body in the streets of Tiruvaiyaru no foot-prints were left on the earth. This is borne out by an internal evidence from his hymns. It may be appropriate to refer here to an instance recorded in the saint's life-histories that when a friend tried to take a photograph of the saint the negative showed only his loin cloth.

This, along with the other powers of the transfigured body described by the saint, shows that at the time of this change the operation of the physical law over his body ceased. It was taken over by the Grace itself. He gives philosophical expression to this as follows:

"Mother Tirothai, the veiling force, has left;
Mother Grace has come; the great Maya has left;
I have attained the golden body; I will not die
at any time."

The transition from 'the control of Maya' to that of a permanent power is wrought by the divine alchemy.

The art of deathlessness originates from, and has its consummation in the Lord Himself. The initiation into the secrets of the imperishability of one's own body can be performed, by none other than the Lord. Hence He is the unique exemplar of embodied immortality. As the preceptor of worldly education drives home the knowledge into the mind of the student eradicating his ignorance, doubts and misconceptions, the Lord gives Himself, i.e., His Soul, Body and Possessions, to the devotee in response to his loving surrender of his soul, body, and possessions. This happened in the case of the saint.

Saint Manickavasakar's attainment of the transfigured bodies is well understood and recorded by the saint in the poem he dedicated to him. He is the only successor of this saint who praised him in this manner, quite intimately understanding his precious attainment. The reason is not far to seek. The saint is an equally evolved soul as well as a poet.

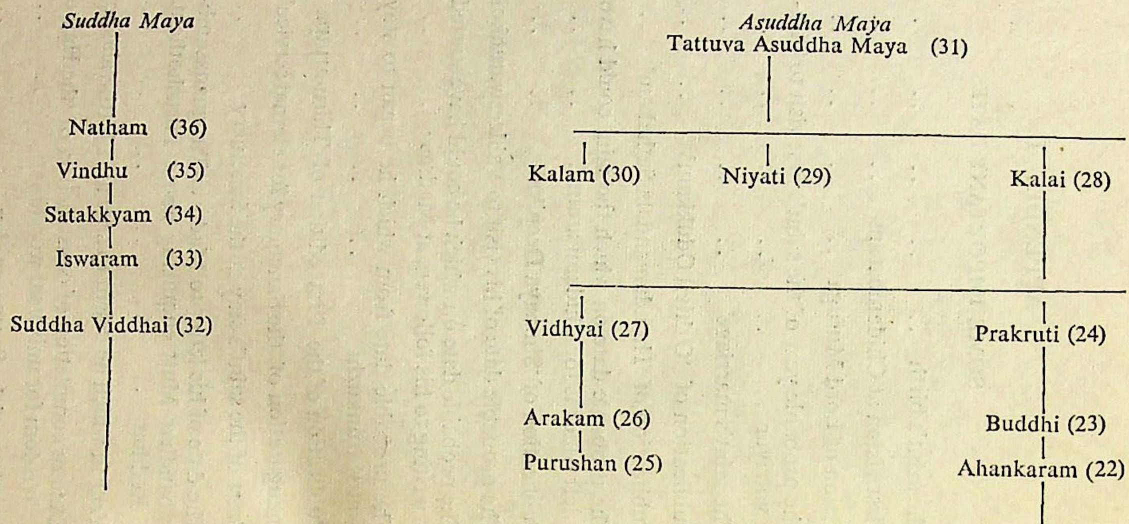
APPENDIX I

SOME IMPORTANT DATES

1.	The saint's birth	5-10-1823
2.	First vision at Chidambaram	March, 1824
3.	Vision of Lord Muruga	1832
4.	The probable year of the saint's first visit to Tiruvotriyur	1835
5.	The saint's marriage	1850
6.	Publication of 'Ozhivil Odukkam'	Dec. 1851
7.	Publication of 'Thondamandala Sathakam' ..	Jan. 1855
8.	The probable date on which the saint could have left Madras for Chidambaram..	1855
9.	Publication of 'Sinmaya Deepikai'	Dec. 1857
10.	The probable date of his visit to Vaideeswarankoil	1856
11.	The probable date on which he could have started writing to his followers at Madras	1858
12.	The probable date from which he began to stay at Karunkuzhi	June, 1861
13.	Publication of the first edition of Thiru-arutpa	Feb. 1867
14.	Inauguration of 'the Sanctuary for eternal service'	21-5-1867
15.	Start of the saint's stay at the Sanctuary ..	21-5-1867
16.	The date of his letter to Madurai-Tirugnanasambbandhar Mutt enquiring about Purushothama Reddiar	Aug. 1868
17.	Year in which he began to stay at Ehitthivalakam	1870
18.	Date of completion of construction of 'the Hall of Wisdom for universal worship'	Dec. 1871
19.	Hoisting of the Sanmarga-flag	15-11-1872
20.	Date of his entering the room at Ehitthivalakam	30-1-1874

APPENDIX II

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE 36 ELEMENTS



Taisatam

Manam (21) (Chittam)

Gnanendiriyam

Ear, (20) | Body (19) | Eye (18) | Tongue (17) | Nose (16)

Vaikarikam (Karmendiriyam)

Speech 15 | Legs (14) | Hands (13) & two secretory organs (12) & (11)

Poodatikam (Tanmattiraikal)

Sound (10) | Touch (9) | Sight (8) | Taste (7) | Smell (6)

Ether (5) | Wind (4) | Fire (3) | Water (2) | Earth (1)

Poothangal

APPENDIX III

TABULAR STATEMENT OF TWENTY-FOUR RELIGIONS CLASSIFIED INTO FOUR CLASSES

	Akam	*Akappuram*	*Puram*	*Purappuram*
1.	Padanavata Saivam	Pacupatam	Tarukkam	Ulakayatam
2.	Petavata Saivam	Maviratham	Mimanjai	Mattiyamika Pouttam
3.	Sivasamavata Saivam	Kapalam	Ekanmava-tam	Yokachara Pouttam
4.	Sivasankiran-tavata Saivam	Vamam	Sankiyam	Soutirantika Pouttam
5.	Iswara-avika-ravata Saivam	Vairavam	Yogam	Vaipathika Pouttam
6.	Sivadhvita Saivam	Aikkiyavata Saivam	Pancharatti-ram	Aruhatam

APPENDIX IV

TABULAR COLUMN SHOWING THE SEVEN CURTAINS IN THE HALL OF WISDOM FOR UNIVERSAL WORSHIP

S. No.	Colour of curtain	The power represented	English equivalent for the power	Function of the power
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	**Black**	Maya Sakthi	Primordial Energy	To veil the Kingdom of the 'Self'
2.	**Blue**	Kriya Sakthi	Power of Action	To veil the 'Self'
3.	**Green**	Para Sakthi	Divine Energy	To veil the Divine 'Space'
4.	**Red**	Ichcha Sakthi	Power of Desire	To veil the knowing faculty of the 'Self'
5.	**Yellow**	Gnana Sakthi	Power of Knowledge	To veil the Truth
6.	**White**	Athi Sakthi	Original Energy	To veil the 'space of the Lord'
7.	**Mixed**	Sith Sakthi	Power of Pure Intellect	To veil the higher experiences

APPENDIX V

THE TWELVE SPACES

Grand Blissful	Space
Grand	Space
Self-divine	Space
Middle	Space
Divining	Space
Transcendent	Space
Divine	Space
Pure	Space
Art	Space
Life	Space
Subtle	Space
Elemental	Space

APPENDIX VI

TABULAR COLUMN SHOWING THE CONNECTION OF VARIOUS TECHNICAL TERMS IN RELATION TO THE MUNDANE AND THE HIGHER EXPERIENCES

Stage of Experience	Category of Experience (Consciousness)	'Space'		Mundane Experience / Higher Experience
Life	1. Waking	Elemental	Base	Mundane Experience
	2. Dreaming	Subtle		
	3. Sleeping	Life		
		Art		
		Pure		
Pure	1. Waking	Elemental	Sublime	Media for the Transition
	2. Dreaming	Subtle		
	3. Sleeping	Life		
	4. Wakeful	Art		
	5. Blissful	Pure		
Divine	1. Waking	Divine		Self Realization
	2. Dreaming			
	3. Sleeping			
	4. Wakeful			
	5. Blissful			
Initiator	1. Waking	Transcendent Space		Grace Realization
	2. Dreaming			
	3. Sleeping			
	4. Wakeful			
	5. Blissful			
Godly	1. Waking	Divining Space		God Realization
	2. Dreaming	Middle		
	3. Sleeping	Self-divine		
	4. Wakeful	Grand		
	5. Blissful	Grand-blissful		

APPENDIX VII

THE SAME TABULAR COLUMN REPRESENTED WITH THE TERMS USED BY THE SAINT

Anubava Nilai	Anubava Vahai	Veli	Ulaha Anubavam — Uyar Anubavam
Jiva	1. Sakkira 2. Soppana 3. Suzhutti	Pootha Pakuthi Uyir Kalai Suddha	Ulaha Anubavam
Nirmala	1. Sakkira 2. Soppana 3. Suzhutti 4. Duriya 5. Duriyadeeta	Pootha Pakuthi Uyir Kalai Suddha	Padigal
Para	1. Sakkira 2. Soppana 3. Suzhutti 4. Duriya 5. Duriyadeeta	Para Veli	Uyir Anubavam
Kuru	1. Sakkira 2. Soppana 3. Suzhutti 4. Duriya 5. Duriyadeeta	Param- para- veli	Arul Anubavam
Siva	1. Sakkira 2. Soppana 3. Suzhutti 4. Duriya 5. Duriya-deeta	Parampara Veli Nadu Veli Tarpara Veli Peru Veli Perunchuga Veli	Siva Anubavam

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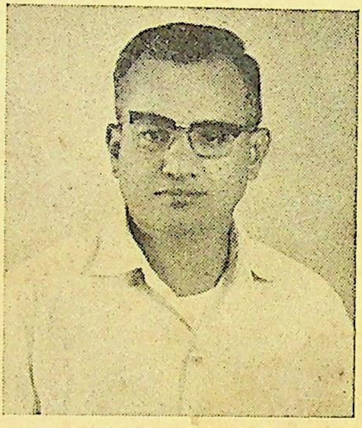
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